

# punk planet

notes from underground

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ISSUE #55

PROVOCATIVE FEATURES OF UNUSUAL INTEREST

MAY AND JUNE 2003



'I LOST  
222 LB.  
WITHOUT  
DIETING'



55>

# Revealed At Last

# THE REVENGE OF

# PRINT

**Cursed***One (CD/LP)*

CURSED serve as the black cloud, the spoilers if you will. Rolling in as an unbridled disaster, equal parts social disgust, emotional upheaval, and total death n' roll destruction. Former members of RUINATION, THE SWARM, and LEFT FOR DEAD.

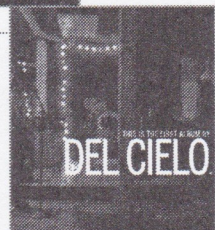
Deathwish

kid brother collective

**Kid Brother Collective***Highway Miles (CD)*

After a self released full length, split 7" with Camber, and a three song ep, Michigan's Kid Brother finally find their home. Dreary and depressive indie rock comparable to bands like Camber, Rival Schools, and Mineral.

One Day Savior

**del cielo***wish and wait (CD)*

the debut full length by these dc sweethearts. think sleater kinney meets discount... rock. eyeball records

**The Now***s/t debut CDep re-press (CDEP)*

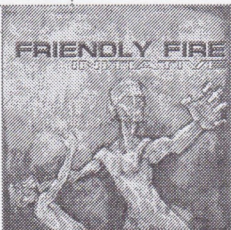
6 tracks of some of the most intense hardcore to come out of the east coast in years, phenomenally all in just under 10 minutes. It seamlessly ranges everywhere from catchy dance parts to raging metal to stony sludge and thunderous mosh, all the while not being unnecessarily complicated like so many bands today. Frantic and chaotic screamy hardcore at it's best, as only Neil Perry and Joshua Fit For Battle members can do it.

Robotic Empire

**friendly fire***initiative (CD)*

Great modern HC from this Brooklyn NYC band. Straight up Ignite style HC, with a strong metal influence. Produced by Carl Porcaro (Killing Time, Electric Frankenstein)

blackout

**pelican***untitled (CDEP)*

This instrumental quartet elicits monumental tones from the same fertile grounds that gave birth to Earth, Isis, Mogwai and Godflesh, subduing the listener with subtle variations on repetition and an unexpected sense of melody.

hydra head records

**Breather Resist***Only In The Morning (MCD)*

A true juggernaut in comparison to their contemporaries, BREATHER RESIST are what all volatile and heavy music wishes it could be. Unpredictable, menacing, and utterly unique in both musical dynamic and defining personality.

Deathwish

**Verbal Assault***Volume One: The Masses and Learn (CD)*

Verbal Assault...a stalwart of the mid-80's scene have put together their demo tape and first record (co-produced by Ian MacKaye at the original Inner Ear studio) on a single CD. It's all digitally remastered and a must for anyone who wants to discover or re-discover THE sound of mid-80's east coast positive/personal hardcore.

Mendit



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# PP55

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—**McSweeney's**

McSWEENEY'S  
8



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Those are the risks ... Are you the gambling type?

# intro55

**S**o what is "The Revenge of Print"? It's this: Fuck the Internet. Fuck e-mail, fuck Flash, fuck the Web. Fuck CDs, CD-Rs, CD-RWs and all the rest. And it's also about this: Fuck bands and their publicists. Fuck publicists and their bands. Fuck record labels and their free CDs. Fuck bookers, fuck promoters, fuck the clubs. Fuck the tour vans and the tour fans. Fuck all of it.

Well, at least for one issue.

For one issue, none of that stuff exists. For one issue, the heroes of the underground are those that never get to see the spotlight: zinemakers, authors, and comic artists. For one issue, the cutting edge isn't made up of bits and bytes, but instead a medium—paper—that has been around for millennia.

A few years ago, mainstream pundits were ready to send paper packing. It had been replaced by the seemingly endless promise of the Internet, they said. It was a "19th century technology" that would be replaced by "21st century innovations." Well, we all know where that went. Umpteen dot-com busts later and the web doesn't have the same sparkle it once had. Don't get me wrong—it's invaluable. But so is print.

This issue we dedicate space (a lot of space in fact—this is our longest issue ever)

to those folks doing the thankless work of *writing it all down*. They may not get the hype that the newest buzz band or hot website gets, but their work is lasting and their efforts needed.

But this issue isn't special only because we talk with these folks. What makes this issue really stand out—and makes it one of my personal favorites that we've ever done—is that their own writing takes center stage. Instead of sending you scurrying off to find the books and zines made by the folks we've collected here, we brought their writing to you in the form of excerpts that accompany each interview. Some are long, some are short—all of them are fantastic and showcase talents (some known, some unknown) that make me proud to work in the medium that I do.

So here's to print—almost 200 pages of it—and to having lots to read on an early spring day.

**DAN**

PS. One last thing to get off my chest: Fuck Bush. Fuck Cheney. Fuck Rumsfeld. Fuck Blair. Fuck Hussein. Fuck the never-ending lead-up to a never-ending war.



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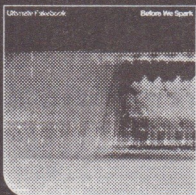


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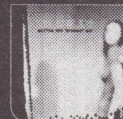
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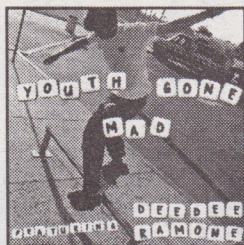
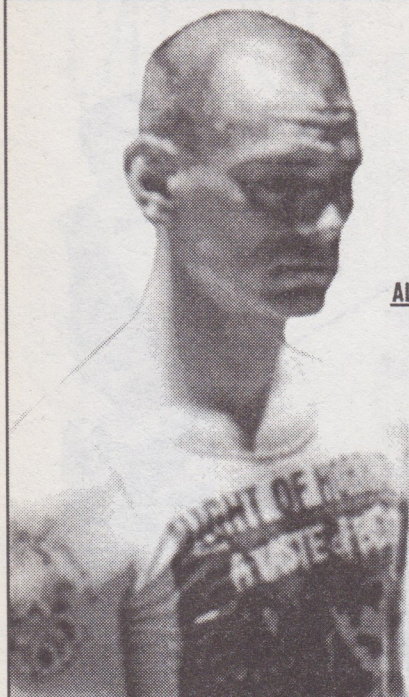
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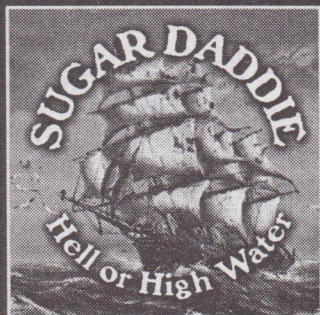
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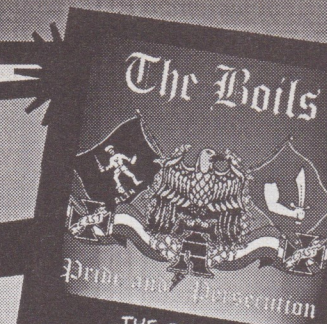
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# mail 55

## Questioning Turn it Down.

► Punk Planet.

I am responding the short article about the 'Turn it Down' organization in issue 52 ["Turning Down White Power's Noise"]. Unfortunately in today's climate I feel I have to preface this letter by saying I'm not now nor ever was a Nazi. I don't consider myself a racist, although I believe xenophobia is a part of human nature. But that is another issue. I really fail to see the problem with racism. Not racism itself, of course. I see the problem with racism itself. But not the prevalence of racism in the punk (and even metal) scene. Perhaps I don't see a good cross section, living in diverse, liberal Madison, Wisconsin. Racism is definitely not a problem here. But really if the first incident in Chicago that comes to mind was a kid with a Skrewdriver patch who left the Fireside quietly when asked, then where's the problem? Racism is a bigger problem in general society and within the governmental power structure especially, but not in the punk scene. I just don't see it.

Now this may be treading on dangerous ground here, but what about free speech? If these 'Turn it Down' guys get a store to stop carrying racist material, haven't they infringed on my right of free speech. What about the owner? It's his/her store. Can't he carry anything he wants? Strongarming someone into doing something, anything that is legal (selling distasteful products) is wrong. Take pornography, or even the mainstream objectification of women. Pornography and sexism take a far greater toll on society than racism in terms of discrimination and violence. But the porno stores and movies are still going strong. As a rational person, I choose not to use

pornography, but I don't want it banned. Who are they to tell me I can't listen to white power CD if I want. If I act in accordance to those beliefs then that's another story—that's a crime. But then this just leads into all the arguments that surround hate crime legislation.

I also would tend to disagree with the Resistance Records profit margin. Sure there is a huge margin on CD manufacture, but 100,000 copies sold? I never see that stuff in any record stores or distros, and being a record collector, I try to hit as many shops as possible. I mean, 100,000 copies? Fat Records doesn't sell that many of most of their titles and they're in Best Buy. It makes sense that those numbers come from Resistance themselves. Of course they want to sound as pervasive as possible. Even one wants to toot their own horn and brag about their success. 'Turn it Down' doesn't believe anything else Resistance Records says, why believe only that which also helps your cause. 'Turn it Down' wants them to be big. Without the numbers, Resistance isn't a force to be reckoned with.

As for the 'Turn it Down' guy . . . That yuppie came and spoke at the University last year in his button down shirt and leather shoes and briefcase. He might as well been a stockbroker or politician, which he probably will be someday. More importantly, he really had nothing concrete to say except some vague stories of record labels and bands from down south and in Montana or some metal bands from northern Europe that the majority of us never heard of, let alone ever heard or bought. Of course the audience was all hopped up on the anti-racism adreneline. It's such a hot-button issue, people shouted down a guy who tried to make a counterpoint. There wasn't even but eight punks in a standing room only crowd. I saw flyers all around

town and at record stores. If it's such a big issue in the punk community, where were they?

I guess my real problem with 'Turn it Down' is that everyone ignores the fact they are a 'faith based' organization. I guess I don't even know what that means. It's a very vague moniker and they don't offer further elaboration. I know I don't like the sound of it though—faith=religion. If Pat Robertson came in and called for scene unity (a worthy cause), would we stand beside him. What if Ashcroft called for cheaper punk CD prices? Would we embrace him? Punk rockers have said 'Nazi Punks Fuck Off' for 20 years before these suburban loud mouths came around. I say the scene doesn't need them. Did the promoter at the Fireside need his help to kick Skrewdriver patch out? No. Do the majority of record stores need the Center to weed out their racks packed with racist cds? No, because the majority of record stores don't carry the stuff to begin with, and if they do, some punk has pointed it out way before 'Turn it Down' rolled into town.

Now they have set their sights on heavy metal. With no real examples except a bad skinhead band, RAHOWA who turned to playing bad metal, and who no one cares about or listens to and a couple others from distant Poland. I remember at Milwaukee metalfest last summer, some racist metal (I forget the name) label was set up. After they packed up, they left a stack of Resistance magazines on their table. I sat and watched people come by picking them up (because they were free and looked nice). After a few steps and a few pages into the mag 98 percent of them went right onto the floor or in the trash. Maybe I am being paranoid here, but for years the metal scene had their sites set on Christianity and religion in general with no traces of racism. Perhaps the racism

issue is a good way for the Center to openly attack the metal scene, while their real issue is with Satanism. They tried to make the parallel in Madison that Paganism was rooted in racism and basically said Pagans are racists. Paganism has nothing to do with religion, or lack of it, and has nothing inherently racist about it. If they came right out and attacked the Satanism, they wouldn't get the time from any metalheads.

I think they are addressing an important issue, albeit not as pervasive as they would like you to think, I believe a kid in the scene wearing a crossed out swastika patch on his sleeve does just as much as all the Center's pamphlets and lectures.

Thanks,

Bob

Madison, WI

## Jawbreaker Fans Speak Up

### ► Punk Planet,

It has been several years since I last purchased a copy of your mag. But today that changed once I saw Jawbreaker on the cover.

The first time I saw Jawbreaker was at this coffee house on the campus of the University of Detroit. The place was packed that night. I saw all kinds of different people from different scenes—you really knew it was something special that Jawbreaker was transcending so many different genres of punk.

Like so many others, I too criticized them for signing. But I still bought *Dear You* and shrugged it off, although, there were a few good songs. In hindsight, it really is a good fucking record. And if any band deserved to make money for their art (yes, I consider their songs art), it was Jawbreaker.

I would like to thank them for years of great music. And for the lyric sheet to *Unfun*,

even though I forgot to send a stamped, self-addressed envelope all those years ago.

M Derrick

### ► Hello All,

I saw issue #53 sitting at a local record shop, and got goose bumps. Jawbreaker—not something you see gracing magazine covers these days.

I purchased the issue immediately, and was quickly floored by Trevor Kelley's interview. Kudos for knowing your shit, Trevor. I have read interviews with members of Jawbreaker in the past, which tend to be dull, and completely uninformative. Your knowledge, appreciation, and historical accurateness made for a read entirely above expectation.

Even more kudos go out for asking about the fight. Reading three different perspectives on the situation shed a certain light unascertainable from a single facet.

You truly have done the Jawbreaker following an invaluable service and I commend you and your publication for being able to deliver this interview.

Sincerely,

Brian W.

CA

### ► What's up?

Just wanted to drop a line to say that I thought that Jawbreaker interview was one of the best things you've ever put in your magazine (and I've been reading it for years).

Thanks for the great reading!

Steve Jones

PA

### ► PP—

I never got a chance to see Jawbreaker. I didn't even own one of their albums until

Blake formed Jets to Brazil and I picked up *Orange Rhyming Dictionary*.

Finding Jawbreaker's records was amazing. His words really spoke to me, even though I would never get to hear him sing them.

It was great to see my favorite magazine and my favorite band together, even if it was for "one time only."

Keep doing great work,

Janet

**Note to self:  
check what the slick  
consumer magazines  
are writing about.**

### ► OK,

This is a really snarky thing to pick on, but that whole melted record bowl craft [DIY Files, PP53] has been featured in *at least* four mainstream magazines in the last year. (Search Google for "vinyl record bowl," for starters.) I'm all for having a craft column in *Punk Planet*, but what's the point when even slick consumer magazines like *Budget Living* were already rehashing it a couple of months ago. Cute though the record bowls are, I'd rather see some eco crafty idea that hasn't been on the cover of *Ready Made*.

Kris

**Wow. We see the light.**

### ► Punk Planet:

War is soooooo very necessary in this situation. You ungrateful slime don't even know the price paid for your freedom. You just exploit the fact you have rights in this country.

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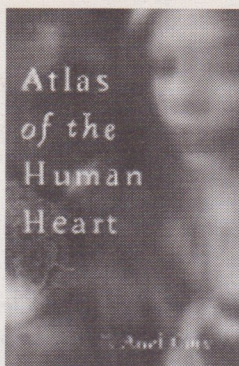
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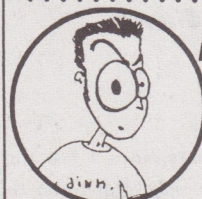
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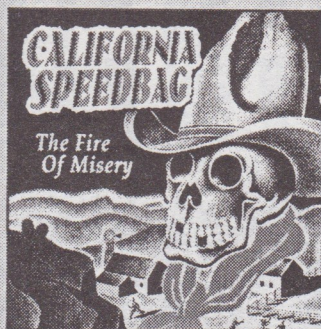
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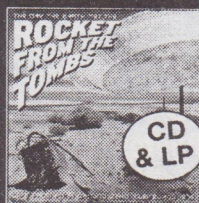
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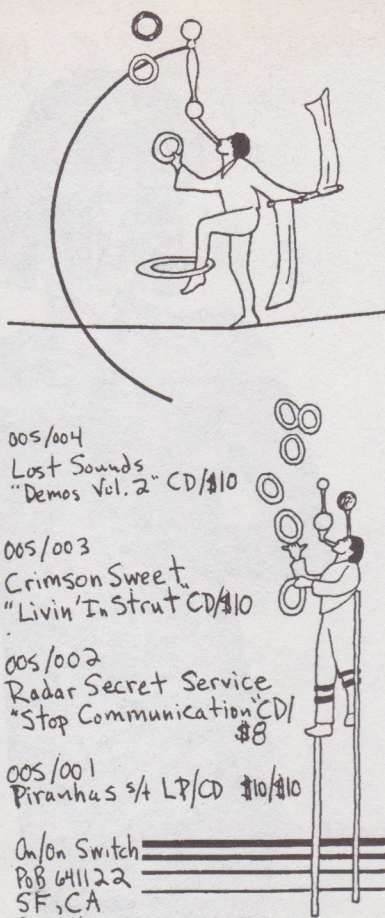
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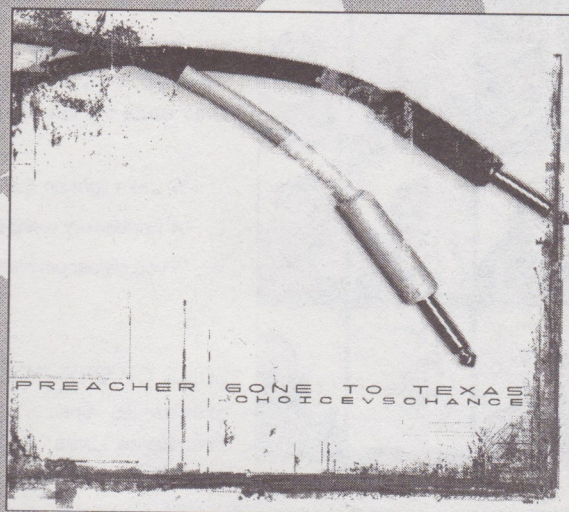
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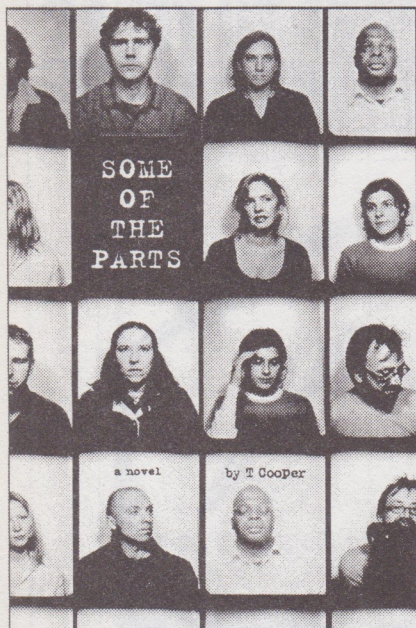
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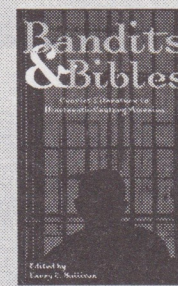
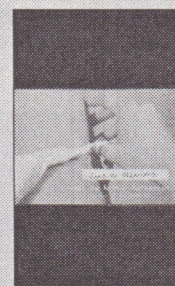
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# static

## SCANNING THE DIAL FOR LIFE ON THE MARGINS

### Sound Salvation

JENNY TOOMEY FIGHTS FOR THE FUTURE OF MUSIC IN FRONT OF THE US SENATE.

"My name is Jenny Toomey. I'm a rocker, a businesswoman, and an activist."

With that, the executive director of the Future of Music Coalition, perhaps best known in the underground as member of the band Tsunami and co-founder of Simple Machines records, began her testimony before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation in late January. The committee, headed by senators John McCain of Arizona and Ernest F Hollings of South Carolina, was holding a hearing on radio consolidation and invited Toomey to testify about the effects of the 1996 Telecommunications Act. Or, more specifically, to help explain why radio sucks.

Toomey's Future of Music Coalition, a not-for-profit think tank for the music industry, was the right organization to call. The group had just finished a comprehensive study for the Rockefeller Foundation on radio consolidation that resulted from the

Telecommunications Act, which dramatically eased the FCC's previous rules on radio-station ownership.

"We were testifying on behalf of citizens," Toomey says, "and basically saying consolidation needs to be taken as a cautionary tale."

As Toomey puts it, "We were asked to testify because we had the numbers." And numbers she did have—and charts and graphs—all painting a damning portrait of the aftermath of deregulation and the overall suckiness of modern radio.

Co-witnesses, such as rockstar Don Henley of the Recording Artists Coalition and urban broadcaster Robert Short, made similar statements. Casting their votes for the "Radio Couldn't Be Better" side were Lowry Mays, chairman and CEO of Clear Channel Communications, and Edward Fritts, president of the National Association of Broadcasters.

Each witness read a five-minute prepared statement and answered questions.

McCain spent much of the three hours grilling Clear Channel's Mays on the company's policies, from expansion, to payola, to how they prepare playlists. Due to its size—besides radio stations, the company owns concert-promotions companies [detailed in PP54], billboards and venues—and aggressive business practices, Clear Channel has become whipping boy for all that's wrong with radio. It's a sentiment, Toomey says, that's a little misguided.

"I suspect some people in broadcasting would like to cut Clear Channel loose as a rogue company," she says. "But the argument we'd like to make is that this is what any competitive American business would try to do. Without caps, you can eliminate Clear Channel, but another one will take its place."

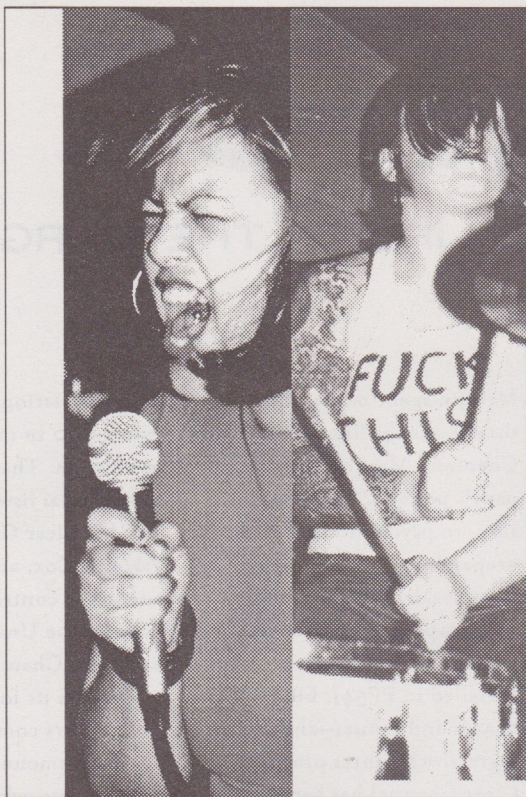
Prior to the Telecommunications Act, the FCC capped station ownership by one company at four in one market and 40 nationally. After the act passed, one company could own eight stations (in the largest markets) without any national limit. Clear Channel went from owning

40 radio stations to more than 1,200 in the space of seven years. That's 27 percent of total listener share in the US. Clear Channel, Viacom, Cox, and Entercom essentially control all of radio in the United States, but Clear Channel's share supercedes its four nearest competitors combined.

It all amounts to radio that's increasingly business-oriented, inaccessible to new artists and lacking in local focus, according to the FMC. To exacerbate the situation, FCC Chairman Michael Powell is considering easing the FCC's current rules of radio ownership, which has people like Toomey up in arms.

Even though some worry about imminent catastrophe, a groundswell of opposition from all sides of the political spectrum may derail Powell's plans and undermine the dominance of companies like Clear Channel. In addition to growing resentment toward radio's anti-artist business model and rumors of corporate impropriety, America's legislators are starting to take note—because it's affecting them directly.

"At the Future of Music conference, we had



## "Fuck This."

VISCIOUS WHITE LIES BUST OUT THE SHARPIE.

Caught up in whos-who scenesterisms, Olympia, Washington is a town in need of an enema. Viscious White Lies is looking to clean out Olympia's gutter by bringing the fun—and the energy—back into the scene. When I sat down with drummer Satan Himself (he's a she), guitarist Tony Fucoli, and vocalist Jenna Riot (bassist Heathy sat this one out), the band let rip on the state of music in their hometown, bringing danger back into punk, and the never-ending contradictions that female musicians face.

**At the show tonight, all the under-age kids got kicked out before you started playing. Once you were on stage, Satan Himself opened the back door and all these kids ran in. What happened?**

Jenna: Well tonight is Heathy's birthday and all of our friends are here, but they got kicked out because they were under 21. It was fucking lame, so we figured we'd wait until the last minute and then just open the door once we started playing—it would be chaotic and maybe they wouldn't notice that the underage kids came back in.

Satan: Some of them were getting kicked out during the middle of our set, so we tried to barrel straight through and not let any open silences give anyone the chance to card people.

Congressman Foley of Florida come and speak," Toomey says of the Republican representative. "He said consolidation had gotten to the point that before the '96 act, if there was an issue he wanted to talk about with his constituents, he could call five stations. Now there's only one."

That's an 80 percent loss

and one big wake-up call to Congress.

"On top of that," Toomey continues, "People understand that radio is terrible." —*Kyle Ryan*

*Toomey's and the rest of the witness' testimony is available in .PDF form at <http://commerce.senate.gov>. You can download streaming video of her testimony at [www.c-span.org](http://www.c-span.org). Toomey testifies at the one-hour, 14-minute mark.*

## Mind Behind Bars

NEIL WEINER'S LIFE IN PRISON IS AN OPEN BOOK ... WELL, ZINE.

I hadn't heard of Neil Weiner or his zine *Weiner Society* before I received the zine to review for *Punk Planet*. His "Think About It" issue was a thick one, and I was immediately taken in by its

typewriter text and spastic but beautiful cut and paste graphics.

More amazing, though, were his incredible descriptions of life in prison, how he got there, and how he's become a better person.

I was completely pulled in and fascinated by everything.

It's hard to find words to describe the beauty of Neil's writing when he's already said it all himself. His stories are at once brutal and free-spirited. Above everything, he reminds you that no matter where you are in life, the personal is *always* political.

**What's it like to do zines while in prison? Do you ever have to hide your writing? Are there others around you who also do zines?**

Well, it sure isn't easy! It takes probably the same amount of dedication and pure drive to act or create something as a young band in some shit town with hardly any scene determined to put out their first 7". But that

makes the act itself so much sweeter, and, yeah, I hide everything! The process is *very* resourceful, subversive, risky and totally born in the criminal mind. There is *no* one around me doing anything political, although my dirt-head homie is trying to do one on death metal, which is crazy.

**Describe the greatest things you've learned from doing your zines.**

Every day I learn more. I've learned that brutal honesty can hurt or taste foul but that it has silver linings. I've learned that I actually *can* be active and somehow contribute to provoking thought in fringe (as well as important) issues, even from my restrained existence. I've

Yeah, I saw a few people being dragged out. That sucks. You guys seem to have this energy that I haven't seen in many new bands from Olympia. I keep seeing you on fliers for all these different shows, like you just played a metal show and are playing the Stonewall Youth Drag show in a week or so, right?

Tony: The problem with Olympia is that so many people are too concerned with *who* you play with or *who* is in your band. Everyone has gotten really apathetic and bored and I stopped going to shows at all because it was like no one even knew why they were there. We'll play with anyone, who gives a fuck?

Satan: Totally. We want to make the people who think they are too cool really uncomfortable. It's all about bringing the danger back into punk rock. I mean danger in a *good* way, not like violence or shit like that, but the spirit of it—the energy. You have to command crowd participation. I think people ultimately *want* to have a good time and dance, but here in Olympia there's this fear of being uncool that's so stifling. Tony and I have been playing music in various projects separately for nine years and we've lived different places, so we are a little older and have a different perspective. I can remember a time when I was going to shows all the time and dancing and it was a release. I saw so many amazing bands and it changed my life. Now I feel like that's gone and someone needs to bring it back.

Is that why you wear T-shirts that say random stuff on them, like "Not Emo", or like the "Fuck This" one you wore tonight?

learned that if you open your mouth, *someone* will respond and that words are powerful forces in humanity. I mean, the *act* is the impact, but the *word* records it for anyone to dissect.

**There's an exceptional, very unique humanistic quality to your writing. Does it come naturally or has it evolved?**

I think both. I've written since I was young. When my childhood got interrupted by years of molestation, I guess I began to communicate my inner anger and pain through dark clumps of words. It wasn't quite poetry, more just shocking phrases, but I've written for most of my life. Beginning with this zine, though, is the first time

I've ever put *my own life* and thoughts out there into circulation. And yeah, in the three years I've been building *Weiner Society*, I've evolved into a quite "no frills, ass-ugly-truth" sort of voice, I think. And then my boyfriend tells me my writing is "beautiful!"

**You also have a unique visual style when it comes to the design of your zines. How you put everything together.**

It's totally old-school, DIY. I use a typewriter, draw almost all my art, cut up personal photos, shred magazines, just primitive cut'n'-paste, coffee-tweaker design—I'd be lost without Scotch tape! It begins, though, with notebooks of

Tony: We want to make a statement when we play. If we have the opportunity to have an audience's attention, we bust out the sharpie and white shirt.

**Even within the punk community, I still don't see that many women playing music and it bums me out. Do you feel like the fact that three of you are women makes up a significant part of your identity as a band?**

Satan: It's hard. You can't make it a non-issue because it's still really important to acknowledge the shit that female musicians have to deal with in terms of harassment and respect and all that shit. But at the same time, it's really nice and refreshing when there's a moment when it's not really at the forefront of anyone's mind and it's just this rock'n'roll show where everyone is getting' down.

Tony: This is actually the first time I have played with women in a band and it has seriously opened my eyes to so much. Like before I was aware of the problems that women face in music because of what the women I hung out with would tell me. But now that I am in this band, I realize I *never* really knew what it was like to walk into a show and feel this vibe of people dissing you automatically based on gender. Now I understand what it's like to have men not move out of your way and sort of just smirk when you are carrying heavy equipment and trying to get by. —Erin McCarley

*Vicious White Lies* is online at [www.geocities.com/viciouswhitelies](http://www.geocities.com/viciouswhitelies)

handwritten shit, then I transcribe. Once that's done, I do my art. Then it's all about blasting "Crush Kill Destroy" or Uncurbed in the cell, using a tiny razor and overdosing on coffee. A few days later the thing sits in an envelope. Destination? Anywhere, USA.

**What would you like to see happen or change in zine culture?**

Well, I don't really see zine cultures as separate from the counter cultures it sprang from. Zines are just as important as kids doing new DIY bands to stir up towns into hotbeds of focalized anger and eagerness to do something. They're as important as the networking, grassroots, political

activist crews; as important as the punk photographer; the basement labels; the kids setting up tours or making signs for protests. I think it's important to never compartmentalize, to spread the passion and branch out. Maybe radical life, or just the desire to be outspoken as well as have dirty hands, gets me so spazzed out I wanna go in a million directions. I'd like to see zines about *everything*. And as far as change? It will happen naturally, regardless of what I want. —Claire Sewell

For issues of *Weiner Society* or Neil's other zines, write *Weiner Society*, 109 Arnold Ave., Cranston RI 02905



## GALLERY: All Through a Life

SILKSCREEN POSTERS BY LEIA BELL

## Another Tragically Beautiful Day

ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALIST ROSS GELBSPAN HEATS UP THE DEBATE ON GLOBAL WARMING.

As special projects editor for *The Boston Globe*, Ross Gelbspan won a Pulitzer Prize in 1984. He's taught at the Columbia University School of Journalism and is the author of one of the most popular books on climate change, *The Heat Is On: The High Stakes Battle Over Earth's Threatened Climate*. I figured he was the guy to find to get the lowdown on all the fucked up weather we've been having.

Last summer in the northwestern corner of California we had a drought and some wildfires and, strangely, we haven't had much rain all fall and winter, which is very unusual for us considering we live in a rainforest. Do you think these events are related to climate change?

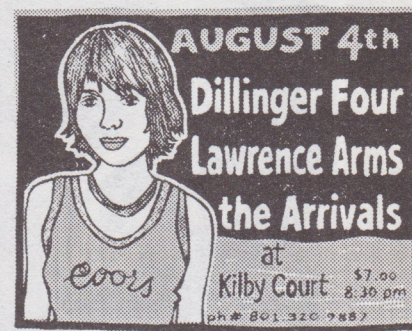
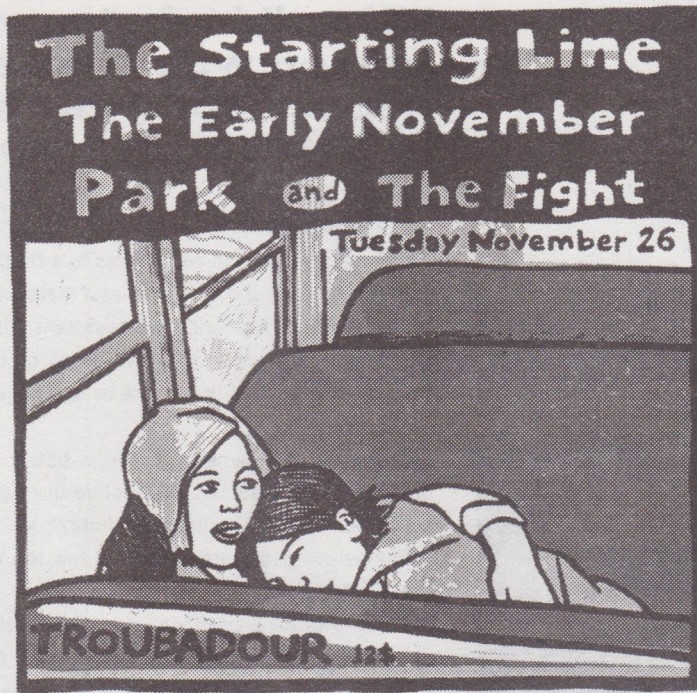
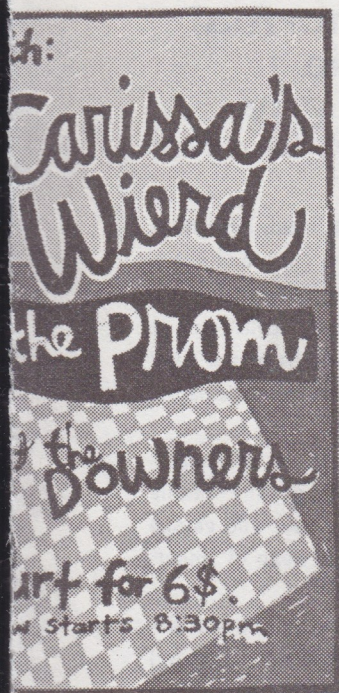
I think there's no question about it. It seems clear to me that one of the first consequences of climate change is a

change in weather patterns. What happens is that as the air warms up, it accelerates the evaporation of surface water, which expands to hold more water. It redistributes the moisture in the atmosphere, so you get much longer droughts, much more severe downpours, and so forth. ¶ What you had in California in terms of the wildfires—as we saw out here in Northeastern Canada, which was also subject to some really serious wildfires—is consistent with this kind of drought. One-half of the US was in drought conditions this summer. At the same time, you had a 1,000 people die from a

heat wave in India, and you had these horrendous floods in Russia, the Czech Republic, and in Germany. All this is directly related to climate change. This is the early stage of global warming.

**Is there real evidence for climate change due to global warming?**

There's a lot of evidence. The first, most basic evidence, is simply the measurable increase in the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Separate from that, you have this real, dramatic increase in weather extremes; the proof of which is reflected in two places. It's reflected in the increase in government budgets for disaster



Leia Bell's hand-drawn concert posters capture the quiet moments in a way so rarely seen in the fluorescents and blaring type of typical concert posters. "I take a camera along pretty much everywhere I go," the Salt Lake City-based Bell explains, "to document friends and random people just hanging out, doing normal stuff. I use the photos to do the drawings for my posters."

relief, but you can really see it in the losses to the world's property insurers. The insurance industry lost an average of two billion a year in the 1980s to these weather extremes. They lost an average of 12 billion a year in the 1990s. That shows that were having many more severe storms, floods, droughts, heat waves, and so forth. ¶ The other body of evidence that I find very compelling—and I'm not even going to go into computer models—are simply things that are actually happening on the planet from heating. First of all, heat expands water, so we are seeing rising sea levels. We are seeing people being evacuat-

ed from their island nation homes in the Pacific Ocean, because they're basically going to be submerged by rising sea levels. A little south of where you are, in Monterey Bay, California, scientists documented a complete turnover of the marine population with cold water fish moving northward and warm water fish and sea animals moving in to populate that area. That's due to ocean warming of the surface waters. Atmospheric warming has pushed a whole population of butterflies from Mexico to Vancouver. We're seeing the migration of whole species to try to maintain the same kind of

temperatures that they're use to. They're moving northward or, if you're below the equator, southward. ¶ We're also seeing warming in the deep oceans, and that's causing the breakup of big pieces of Antarctica's ice shelves. There was a piece the size of Rhode Island that broke off last spring. That's the third piece of that size that's broken off since 1995. Deep water heating is also changing the patterns of El Niños that play havoc with weather all over the world. For hundreds of years, El Niños recurred at fairly predictable periods, but now they're becoming more frequent and intense.

Additionally, the tundra in Alaska, which for thousands of years has absorbed carbon dioxide and methane is now thawing and releasing those gases back into the atmosphere. The final one that I'll mention right now is the change in the timing of the seasons. Because of the buildup of carbon dioxide, spring now arrives more than two weeks earlier in the northern hemisphere than it did 20 years ago. All these events are physical changes that have been documented in the scientific, peer-reviewed literature, and these are all consequences of the warming of the planet.

But is all this linked to us?



## "She did what any normal person would do: she pepper-sprayed the guy."

THE FUSE! ARE LOOKING FOR A FIGHT. YOU GAME?

It seems that rock & roll is being "reinvented" on an hourly basis these days by every musician with access to a thrift-store guitar and a sub-talented sibling or spouse—or at least that's what we're being force-fed by the almighty rock-critic establishment. Obviously, participants in this parade of predictability have yet to be deflowered by the Fuse! (they're adamant that their name be spelled just like that: "It's part of our copyright!").

They're a Downey, California-based power trio (emphasis on "power") whose self-destructive live sets and equally volatile sound—a head-on collision of vintage soul, no-wave and garage shock—have catapulted them to the top of the heap of "must-see bands."

Currently the stars of their own documentary and many a club promoter's sleepless nights, band members F-1 (drums) and F-2 (guitar) took time out of their busy recording schedule to clear their name and talk revolution while an absent F-3 (bass) soaked up some sun at one of our local beaches.

The United Nations asked that question in 1988. They put together a panel of more than 2000 scientists from 100 countries called the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. These scientists did lots of experiments to distinguish between natural warming and greenhouse warming. In 1995, they said they had reached a consensus: Human beings are changing the climate and it's because of our burning of fossil fuels. It's very important to remember that this is rigorously, peer-reviewed science

**What are the politics of climate change? We hear so little about it in the corporate media. Our government doesn't appear to be doing anything about it. Why?**

Nothing is being done about it in the United States, but other countries are *extremely* aware of it. The science is unambiguous: Humanity needs to cut its emissions by at least 70 percent to allow the climate to stabilize. So, in Europe for example, Holland has just finished a plan to cut her emissions by 80 percent in four years. The Germans have committed to cutting emissions by 50 percent in 50 years. The British are talking about cuts of 60 percent in 50 years. It's only in the US where nothing is being done and the issue is not being discussed. This is simply because of the lock that the oil and coal industry have on our Congress and especially on the Bush Administration. But even before that, during the

Clinton Administration, nothing was done.

**What can we do individually or collectively to slow down or stop global warming?**

I really think this is more of a political question, than a lifestyle question. First of all, I'm not advocating that we all sit in the dark and ride bicycles. We're used to a certain amount of energy and I think we need that kind of energy to have a productive society and a productive economy. I think what really needs to happen is political action to empower governments to change energy subsidies, and to regulate the oil companies into this transition. I've talked to several oil company presidents, and they say, "We can do this. We can become renewable energy

companies, but we have to be regulated by the government so we do it all together without losing any competitive standing within the industry."

¶ There are some real serious splits within the oil industry already. British Petroleum, which believes very strongly in global warming, is the world's biggest seller of solar systems. Shell Oil has just put a billion dollars into a new renewable energy company. There are huge oil companies that know that this is happening and they're sort of having an internal industry war against companies like ExxonMobil that are trying to burn the last drop of oil they can get there hands on. —David Ross

*David Ross does a talk show on KMUD radio in Redway, CA.*

So what clubs have the Fuse! been banned from?

F-1: I don't know if "banned" is really the right word, but there's an all-ages club that rhymes with "Crane Attraction," and we can't play there.

F-2: They're masquerading as a little all-ages punk rock club, but it's the polar opposite of the Dischord Records/DC all-ages scene—it's like Chuck E Cheese. What we need here in LA and Orange County more than anything is for the bands to take a stand. There are very few bands who will actually take a stand and say, "We're not playing that place because it's so fucked-up." We need more of that. We talk what we talk, but we always back it up.

You've gotten your rep for a reason: What happened at the Cobalt Café?

F-1: You mean "fight night"? We were playing with the Starvations and the Lipstick Pickups, and after we played our set, my snare got bashed into one of their little \$20 neon signs—one of those signs that looked like it came out of a Cracker Jack box. Everyone's having a laugh at it at that point, and this guy comes out and says, "You owe me \$300." I reached into my pocket and pulled out 38 cents. Then he says, "Oh, that's it! I'm holding your drum set here!" And he suddenly gets all belligerent and takes a swing at one of our friends' girlfriends, so she did what any normal person would do: she pepper-sprayed the guy. At that point, everyone just jumped on the guy and got their licks in. And then they had the audacity to

call the cops. So that club is totally in the wrong, and now they totally screwed themselves because everybody got wind of it.

F-2: I guess that's where the name the Fuse! came from—any time there's a fight, you can guess who set it off.

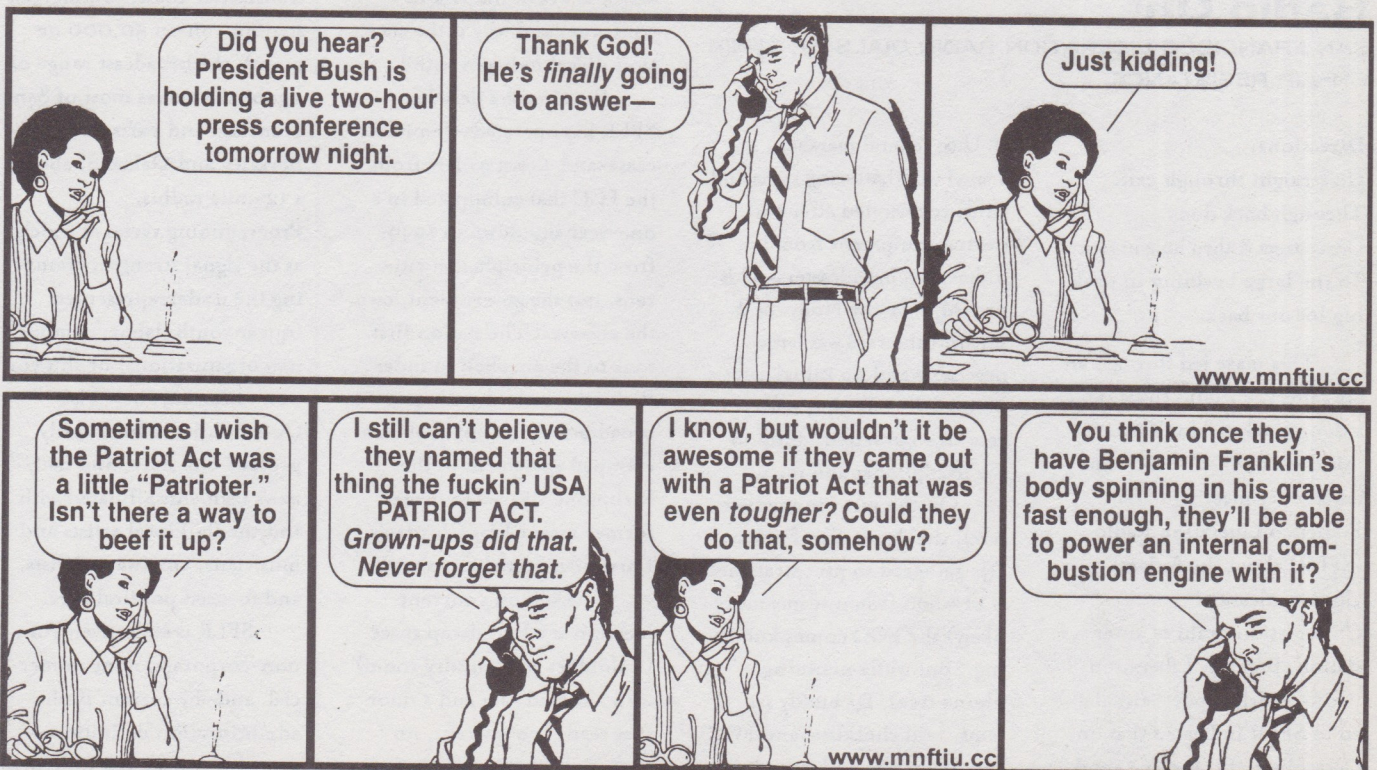
What's the main difference between audiences in LA and Orange County?

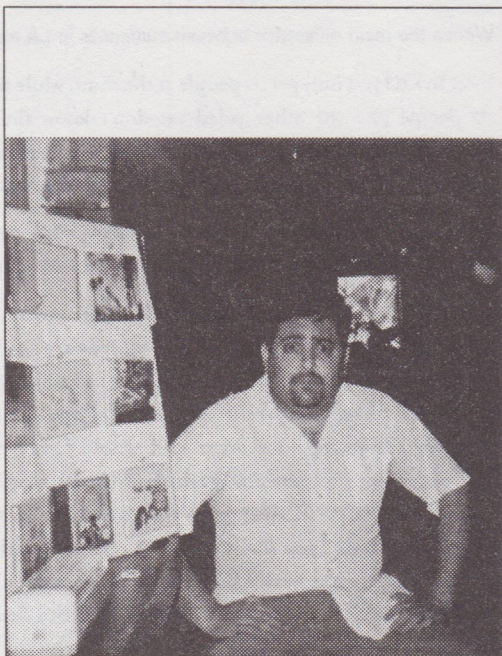
F-2: In OC you only get 10 people at the show, while in LA you get those 10 people plus 30 other jaded-yet-don't-know-the-fuck-about-anything types. What makes you so cool, other than the fact that you stand in front of your mirror for an hour and convincing yourself that you are?

Amid all the brawling and attitude, I think a lot of people overlook the fact that the Fuse! have a large soul influence in your music.

F-2: We use lots of soul chords. But then again, if you listen to Gang of Four records, lots of their chords are soul chords. It's like the way that Andy Warhol would get an old photograph of Marilyn Monroe and reconfigure it. We're doing the same thing—it's Pop Art. We take an old soul chord and an old Otis Redding breakbeat and put it back together in a whole different way because it has to stay relevant. Otis Redding was making music in the '60s that was 20 years ahead. That's why I have a problem with all these mod- and soul-revivalist bands because these guys are looking 40 years back—those other bands were looking into the future. —Jim Freck

## Get Your War On BY DAVID REES





## "The whole idea of a label-next-door is appealing to me."

ABSOLUTELY KOSHER RECORDS' CORY BROWN REVEALS THE MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

I can't seem to express how much I appreciate the releases on Absolutely Kosher. Featuring artists ranging from Franklin Bruno, The Mountain Goats, Optiganally Yours, and Pinback, Absolutely Kosher's growing and eclectic roster is compelling, heartfelt and consistently well-chosen.

Based in the garage of his home in Berkeley, California, Cory Brown runs his label with the assistance of three interns, a bubble jet printer, and a lot inspiration and hard work. Absolutely Kosher stands out in an era of genre-specific niche-market companies in its genuine embrace of singer-songwriter artistry and guitar based, independent rock and roll.

### What made you decide to start the label?

I worked for three and a half years for a distributor who worked with many independent labels as well as labels that were owned by the majors. During that time, in addition to seeing some really great music come out, I also saw an incredible amount of incompetence

## Radio On!

SAN FRANCISCO LIBERATION RADIO DIALS UP THEIR ON-AIR RESISTANCE.

### Directions:

Go straight through exit.  
Through back door.  
Cross street & thru hole in fence.  
To the large building in parking lot out back.

This maze led through an art gallery, a studio space, and a door marked "don't prop this door open EVER," to an emergency meeting of San Francisco Liberation Radio (SFLR) about the Federal Communication Commission's raid of sister station, Berkeley Liberation Radio. Early reports circulated to SFLR indicated that on December 11<sup>th</sup>, the FCC and

15 U.S. federal marshals, armed with battering rams and guns, confiscated all broadcasting equipment from the unlicensed broadcasters. This proved to be the Hollywood version; the raid was largely peaceable and no initial arrests were made, but every audio resource was seized, down to the headphones and mics.

On the most immediate level, the dozen San Francisco DJs gathered to plot strategies if or when (when seems more likely) the FCC comes knocking. But while planning phone trees, DJ buddy systems, raid checklists and FCC fire drills, the real issue is

why it is worth the risk to continue, and why is the station illegal to begin with?

For almost a decade, SFLR has operated—despite cease-and-desist orders from the FCC that culminated in a one-year shutdown in 1999—from the principle that citizens, not the government, own the airwaves. The station first took to the air when founder Richard Edmondson began broadcasting in 1993 from his cramped apartment in the Richmond district to protest former mayor Frank Jordan's Darwinian homeless policies.

The station's current location is a low, damp space (it doubles as a laundry room) with a locked gate and a door that reads "no warrant, no entry." With only a 100-watt

transmitter (most commercial stations run on 50,000 or more), the broadcast range on a good day serves most of San Francisco and parts of Berkeley and Oakland, about a 12-mile radius.

Programming varies as widely as the signal strength, featuring the underrepresented (queer youth, labor, community organizations) or shit you won't hear anywhere else (Asian oldies, a hilariously profane talk show, and daily news segments affiliated with Indymedia,) local artists and musicians, anti-war activists, and focused political rage.

SFLR is collectively run, non-corporate, noncommercial, and—by current Bush administration definitions—probably considered a terrorist

and mishandling of music. I thought, "I could do this and I could do it better," so I started kicking around the idea of starting a label. Around the same time, I kept seeing this one band called PEE around San Francisco opening for other bands I really liked and they completely blew me away. I asked them to do a record with me, and they said yes, and suddenly I had a record label. ¶ The whole idea of a label-next-door is so appealing to me. I've always liked the idea that, as a fan, you can just stop by during the day and see the label and have it be something that does not have this man-behind-the-curtain mystique. I take it very seriously, in terms of the quality of the records we are releasing, but it's just me and three unpaid interns. To pretend we are something we are not—which is something a lot of labels our size do—is a big turn off.

#### Do you think people pick up on that?

Sometimes. Every invoice is printed on our rinky-dink ink jet printer and every invoice is personalized by me. They might seem like default notes, but they're not. I wonder if people who do this professionally—writers and people along those lines, shrug or flinch when they see some of the more homey aspects of the label, but I don't worry too much about it. ¶ I think the free label samplers that we give away have been my favorite thing about the label. It seems to me that giving away music should be part of any record label. The idea is that we stand behind our music and that people will hear the

music and become interested in our records and seek them out—and it works! There are plenty of people who were only interested in our best-selling release and wound up getting turned on to a number of other bands through the sampler. We burn all of the samplers on our own CD burner and package each one up ourselves. I have gotten requests from all over the world—I got one yesterday from Pakistan! I've sent out stuff to nearly every state in the US and dozens of countries around the world. These are people I never would have met or even come into contact with had it not been for the music and that is really awesome to me. It's incredible to know that due to our small efforts here at Absolutely Kosher, the music is actually being played in nations around the world, even if it's just at one guy's house. ¶ There is definitely a mystique about record labels and I think that DIY debunks a lot of that, but not always in the best way. I feel encouragement for other labels that are doing this, but there is also a lot of frustration because there are plenty of people who do not know what they are doing. Some of those people have a lot of money, which is the worst because they ruin it for everybody through indiscriminate spending. I don't want to take that right away from anybody, but if you want to start a record label, ask questions. Ask a lot of questions. —Jessica Schwartz

For a free Absolutely Kosher CD sampler and to sign up for the mailing list, e-mail [macher@absolutelykosher.com](mailto:macher@absolutelykosher.com) or write to 1412 10th Street, Berkeley, CA 94710-1512

cell. Sympathetic lawyers have offered consultation services, and the station is focused on preparing for a legal battle and concurrent fight to bring the issue to broader public attention. In the Bay Area especially, microradio would whup the FCC in the court of public opinion. After all, widespread popular disgust, even in the red states, defeated TIPS (Terrorist Information and Prevention System, in which would have encourages citizens to spy on each other).

The challenge is to gain public support and the sympathy of local politicians, before such democratic broadcasting outlets are eliminated by the Federal Communications Commission. Thanks to continued agitating by the likes of

SFLR, the debate for media diversity is gaining allies in Congress concerned that, as Senator Byron Dorgan (D-North Dakota) asked, "when you talk about more voices, are you talking about more voices from one ventriloquist?"

Some are coming around to realize that with legitimate media outlets putting their reporters in a corporate headlock, increasing governmental silencing of dissent, and legislation intended to protect signal purity and public safety locking out the little guys, free radio is more important than ever. As Stephen Dunifer, the notorious spearhead of Free Radio Berkeley said, "if you can't communicate, you can't organize. If you can't organize, you can't fight back." Or

to crib from John Poindexter's sinister "Total Information Awareness" program, "knowledge is power."

For those that can't wait for more legislators to come around, and for those that know it's just a matter of time before San Francisco Liberation Radio is raided, alternate locations and stockpiled equipment ensure that

the station will resume within days. The activists, journalists, and radio-enthusiasts that keep SFLR operational are ready to keep their knowledge powerful.

—Katje Richstaater

San Francisco Liberation Radio can be heard on 93.7 in the Bay Area or at . Write to: PO Box 14455, San Francisco, CA 94114. Studio line: 415-648-9222. [sflr@mail.com](mailto:sflr@mail.com)

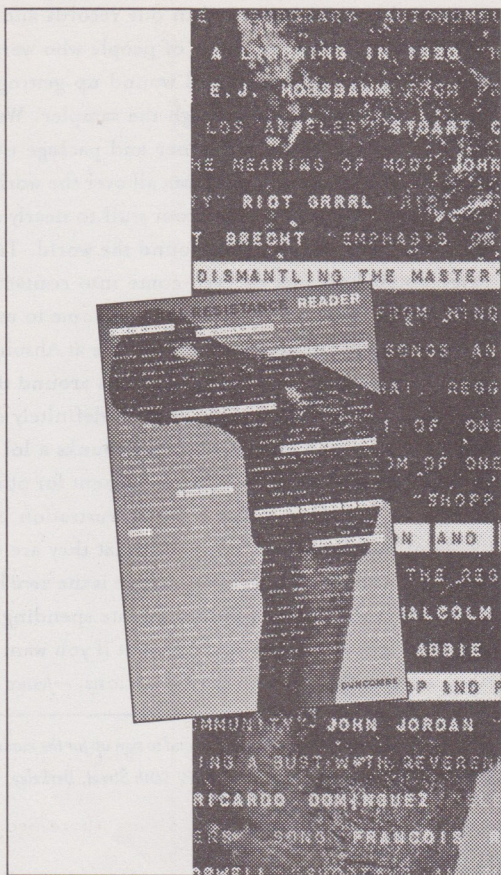
## Getting Trashed

A NEW DOCUMENTARY TRACKS THE HISTORY AND MYSTERY OF GARBAGE.

Heather Rogers's debut short film *Cone Tomorrow: The Secret Life of Garbage*, opens with an unsettling, oddly beautiful image: an aerial view of New York City's Fresh Kills land-

fill, the "largest man-made object on Earth."

Speaking from her Brooklyn apartment, located two blocks from a plastics laminating factory, with several



## "Show, Don't Tell"

READING CULTURAL RESISTANCE WITH  
AUTHOR STEPHEN DUNCOMBE.

"It's really targeted towards students—whether they're in school or not—who want to move towards being activists, or activists who want to move towards being students," explains Stephen Duncombe, discussing the *Cultural Resistance Reader*, an impressive anthology that brings together diverse material ranging from Karl Marx to Riot Girl. "That's why I weighted some heavy theoretical stuff with how-to and I've-done-it-this-way. I was really interested in trying to get people excited."

Anthologies aren't usually all that exciting, but Duncombe pulls it off by refusing to abide by the unspoken rules that divide one mode of writing from another. An excerpt from Virginia Woolf's meditative *A Room of One's Own* is followed by a manifesto from Radicalesbians; an interview with Kathleen Hanna copped from this very magazine is followed by a Bertolt Brecht commentary on the political value of sports.

The unexpected and sometimes brutal juxtapositions in the table of contents help us read familiar texts in a new light and unfamiliar ones in light of their relationship to political "classics." Most striking is the transition Duncombe makes between a passage from *Generation Ecstasy*, Simon Reynolds's superb history of rave culture and "Huge Mob Tortures Negro," a sympathetic newspaper account of a 1920 Georgia lynching.

"What I wanted to point out is that cultural resistance can be very, very reactionary," Duncombe says of that particular juxtaposition. "Now I could say: 'Reader beware! These are great, inspirational selections, but you should be careful.' Or I could convey the same message

garbage transfer stations nearby, Rogers explains why she decided to make a movie about trash: "Garbage is something everyone produces every day, so everyone can relate to it." She began with straightforward curiosity about refuse: "Where does it go? What happens to it?" The answers may surprise even the environmentally conscious audiences.

We are frequently told to take personal responsibility for the earth: to stop buying so much crap, and most importantly, recycle. In fact, according to *Cone Tomorrow*, more Americans recycle than vote. Asked why they do it,

on-screen enthusiasts say "I feel like I'm doing something good for the world" and "It's a hip thing, like having a higher consciousness" (OK, so most of the film was shot in California). The film introduces us to some particularly enterprising DIY-types whose entire home is structured around recycling. The water left over from their shower goes straight to the garden; they compost all food waste and even their own shit.

If you're not sure you can go that far, don't feel too guilty. Rogers calls such efforts "admirable," but says recycling is "not a long-term

solution." For one thing, as the film points out, since there are not nearly enough markets for recycled materials, much of the material we dutifully sort and stack just gets sent to the landfill anyway. Just as distressingly, many recycling processes cause considerable amounts of pollution of their own.

Rogers' 19-minute film skillfully charts the history of pro-recycling, anti-litter "public education" campaigns funded by industry. Responding to a growing public awareness about the environment, and some legislative attempts at regulation, including a 1957 Vermont law

banning the sale of disposable beverage containers, these campaigns successfully framed garbage as a matter of individual irresponsibility, distracting the public from the problem of production.

Production is, in fact, the root of the trouble. Industry makes way too much disposable packaging, and has enthusiastically embraced the concept of built-in obsolescence. As Berkeley geography professor Richard Walker points out in Rogers' film, capitalism tends toward "creative destruction," not only tearing down old factories, but actually tearing down its own products."

with an example. It was the most horrifying account of a lynching that I could come across. I included it after going to this art exhibition of postcards of a lynching at the New York Historical Society. You see these pictures of men who have been hung around tons of grinning people having picnics. And you realize, "Oh, my gosh. This is a kind of cultural celebration—this is resistance against the state." So I included 'Huge Mob Tortures Negro' to get my point across. When I'm grading my students' papers I always say, 'Show. Don't tell.'"

The *Cultural Resistance Reader* does a great job of living up to Duncombe's dictum. But it also includes some judicious telling. The short introductions he supplies for each selection are both thoughtful and informative. And his introduction is a brilliant example of the political personal essay, as his discussion of punk demonstrates:

And so it was that punk rock taught me my first, and probably most important, political lessons. I learned the importance of community. Alone, I owned my problems. I was alienated, I was bored, I was too sensitive to injustice. But as a punk I found others who also had these problems, and since we all seemed to share them, we reasoned that they must not just be ours, but society's problems. My personal problems became a social problem.

Duncombe made a name for himself exploring similar terrain in *Notes From Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* in 1997, one of the best-researched, best-written scholarly books about zine culture that you'll ever see. Whether examining punk, zines, or protest movements, Duncombe has a keen eye for contradiction. His affirmation of punk community in the introduction to the *Cultural Resistance Reader* gives way to a more sober vision:

That 1957 Vermont law was eventually overturned, thanks to the beverage industry's persistent lobbying, and no similar law has been passed since then. But, as Rogers suggests, there's nothing natural or inevitable about this sad state of affairs: in Germany and Taiwan, companies are obligated by law to take back any packaging waste they produce, and to shoulder the cost of recycling it. They are audited by the state and if they don't do it, they face steep fines.

*Gone Tomorrow* is outstanding political art, blending provocative analysis, a playful

sensibility and sober realism. The archival footage is splendid, from early 20th-century rag-pickers, to the "Keep America Beautiful" ad featuring Ronald Reagan.

Yet many viewers have been upset by *Gone Tomorrow's* critique of recycling. "People get pissed off at me," says Rogers, "Because they feel like I'm saying don't recycle, which I'm not. I'm saying we need to think about alternatives." Rogers, for her part, is a dedicated recycler. "I know it doesn't work," she says, "But I do it and feel bad if I don't."

Rogers thinks it isn't so hard for people to change their

Punk was a great tool for articulating the problems of my world, and providing a supportive culture where I could develop that critique, but punk in itself did nothing to affect the root causes of things—racism, sexism, and class inequality—I was so angry about. Punk had no strategic plan; it had no plan at all. In some ways punk rock was merely a release, an escape valve for my political dissatisfaction.

It's in the space between these two descriptions of punk—community-building and escapist—that he wants readers to deploy the readings in his anthology.

The project turns on the relationship Duncombe delineates between the 'pre-political' and the 'political.' Building on the work of historian Eric Hobsbawm, he defines the 'pre-political' as cultural movements that "don't have a political vocabulary" yet whose "acts are or could be in the process of becoming political." The 'political', by contrast, is what brings about real social change instead of simply providing the *feeling* of transformation.

"What I'm interested in are the nascent forms, the stuff that's happening on the ground all the time and the question of how you recognize and channel it, move it into a sphere where it can actually bring about political change. I think the key to any sort of good political organizing—and this is one of Antonio Gramsci's ideas—is that you've got to start where people are. You can't just go in and say, 'You all have false consciousness. I'm going to be the true believer that tells you the line of march.' That doesn't work. It has never worked. You really have to start where people are and with what they are already doing." —Charlie Bertsch

The *Cultural Resistance Reader* is available from Verso: [www.versobooks.com](http://www.versobooks.com)

habits. "How about making people abide by the wage labor system? That was a huge behavioral shift, getting people to go to work every day—and now everyone does it," she laughs in amazement. "The thing that is really hard is getting *industry* to change, because they will lose profits. That means confronting capital, which people find overwhelming."

Asked if she finds the uphill battle she's talking about overwhelming, Rogers says, "I don't. It is overwhelming if you think you have to do it all by yourself. But you don't have to do that. You can help build a move-

ment, and engage in the battle of ideas." Rogers is continuing to do just that: she and her boyfriend, journalist Christian Parenti (an associate producer on *Gone Tomorrow*) are collaborating on a book about garbage that is closely based on the film.

*Gone Tomorrow* convincingly demonstrates that the problem of garbage, and its solutions, are political ones. As Richard Walker warns in the film, "if you don't regulate, you can drown in your own waste." —Liza Featherstone ©

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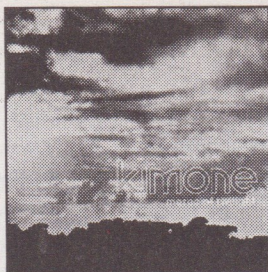
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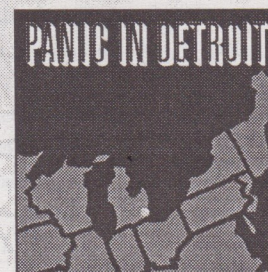
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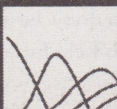
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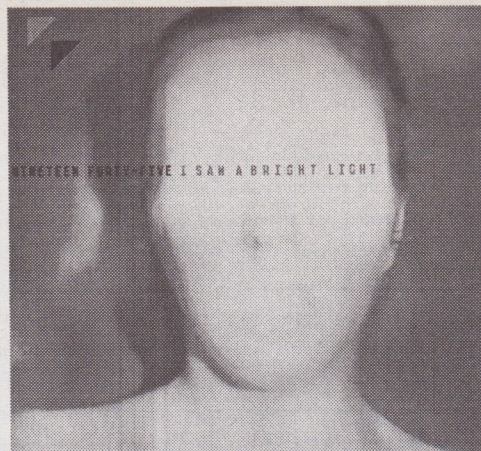


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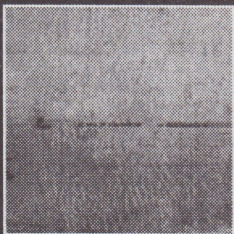
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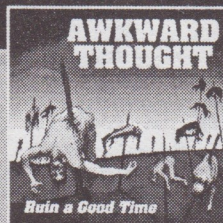
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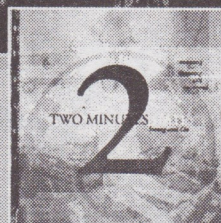
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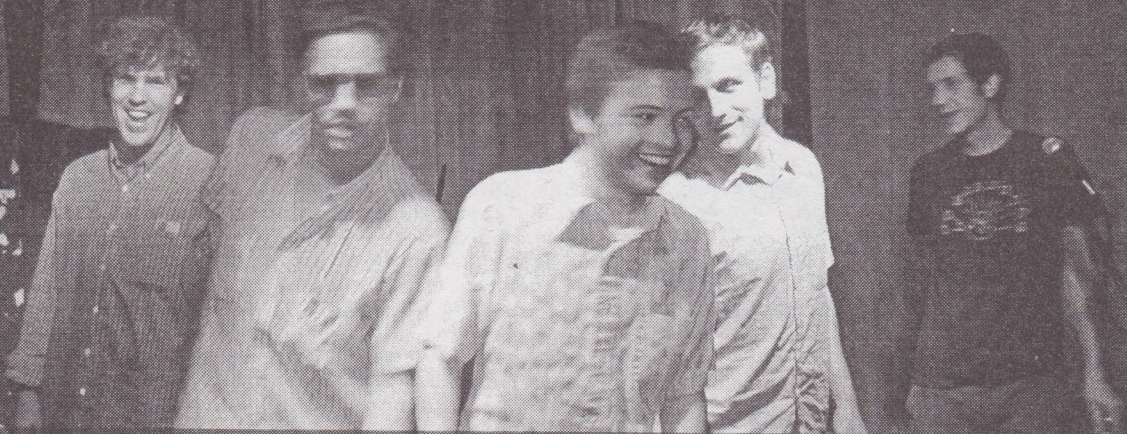
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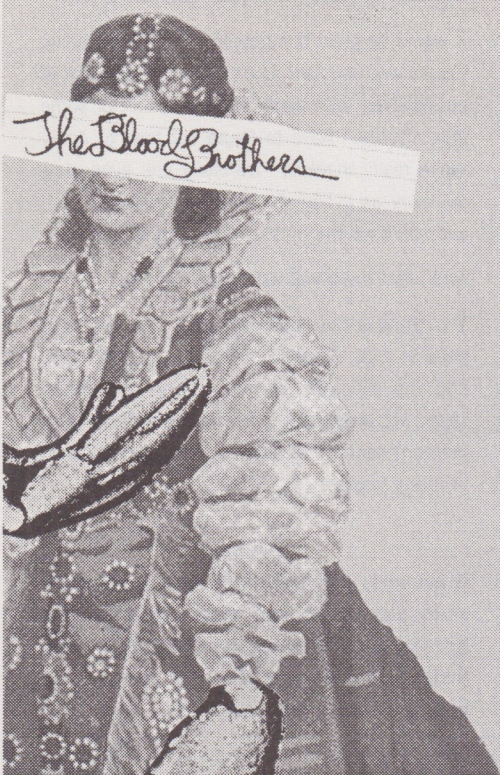


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**T**he first time I heard of *McSweeney's* was when *Punk Planet* lost an award to them. We had both been nominated for "best zine" and I went to the fine Quimby's bookshop here in Chicago to check out the competition. I came face to face with a beautifully designed, hardback—*goddamn it!*—book called *McSweeney's*. Breaking the sturdy spine, I found intense, wordy prose by writers so hot and so hip you almost felt like you had to produce a membership card to pick the thing up. I knew we were going to lose.

And I hated them for it.

Not that I wanted to win, although it would have been nice, but because what they were doing was *too nice*, was *too slick*, was *too . . . well*, too good to be a zine, to be totally honest.

But why couldn't *McSweeney's* be a zine? Because it was hard bound? Because it was well written? Because it cost a lot (*because* it was hardbound and well written)? Back then, it was *fuck yeah* for all of those reasons. But in the years since, those same arguments have been lobbed *Punk Planet's* way, and as one might expect, I disagree with them. And so it's come that I've come around on *McSweeney's*. It's about goddamn time.

*McSweeney's* is amazing. For 10 issues and five years now the folks behind it have continually pushed the boundaries and themselves to produce thick tomes of some of the best writing from both known and unknown writers. Propelled into a much larger spotlight by the mainstream success of founder Dave Egger's book *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, *McSweeney's* expanded into a full-fledged publishing house, putting out books by *McSweeney's* contributors and other writers. Eggers even chose to publish his follow up to *Heartbreaking Work*, *You Shall Know Our Velocity* on *McSweeney's*, turning down very lucrative publishing contracts in the process.

Perhaps most impressive is that in addition to continuing to be on print's cutting edge, the *McSweeney's* folk (Eggers, publisher Barb Bersche, and managing editor Eli Horowitz are among the small staff of *McSweeney's* and joined in collectively answering my questions) have opened 826 Valencia, a writing center for youth in San Francisco's Mission District (the space doubles as *McSweeney's* HQ and a pirate-supply store—no joke). It's an admirable move—in addition to helping to spread the gospel of great writing among their peers, they're helping to ensure that it exists for the next generation of writers—and a lasting legacy from a group of

people that didn't need to worry about theirs.

But contrary to their lofty ideas and verbose print personas (their writing is so clever it borders on pretentious at times), the folks at *McSweeney's* are unusually shy. No phone interviews—e-mail only. No photos. No sudden movements. As a result, I'll cop to the fact that this interview leaves many questions unanswered. Which is maybe how it should be. Each issue of *McSweeney's* is something of a mystery—why get all the answers now?

Interview by Daniel Sinkler

## FUNCTION

**So why print? Why not freely-downloadable PDF files? Or elaborate spoken-word tours? Or smoke signals? Or hand-written notes passed during class? Why spend so much time, effort, and money producing a printed quarterly journal?**

Books will always be books. It's pretty clear at this point that everyone likes books, in the form they're currently made, and that they'll never be replaced by e-books, or PDFs, or whatever else. It's not much fun to make something that you can't hold in your hand, is it? If you work that hard on something, you want tactile proof—something you can put on a shelf, touch, or give to someone—don't you?

**What made you decide to start a literary journal in the first place?**

The main reason, probably, anyone starts any small magazine or record label: because there was stuff out there no one else was publishing, and we thought we might as well do it. In terms of the format, it's a good one, first of all because the quarterly schedule favors the tiny staff *McSweeney's* started with.

**Was there a real plan back when you were starting out? Any idea that this could possibly catch on?**

The one plan Dave had originally was to quit after eight issues. He figured that we'd be able to do everything we could do with the medium in eight issues, and then we'd call it a day. But obviously Issue 8 came and went, and we're working on Issue 11 now, and that'll be a really new thing, and Issue 10 was totally different, and Issue 12 we already have a good idea for, so as long as we can keep experimenting.

**Have you ever just lined up all the issues of *McSweeney's* in a row, sat there with the spines staring back at you and thought either: "fucking amazing"; or, "what have I done?"**

Well, yeah. Whenever a new book or journal

comes back from the printer, some of us put 'em all together on the floor to have a look. It's nice.

**Are there moments where you're scared by the success? Is there more you want to achieve?**

It would be great if we could just keep on doing this for a while. Each book presents a new set of possibilities; with each issue we think of some idea and then have to figure out how to do it. We're really thankful—we really are, every day, as corny as it sounds—that we're still around, and still have the means to publish stuff.

**And what have you achieved, anyway?**

The thing we're most proud of is what happens at 826 Valencia. We've got a great staff, and the different elements here—the pirate store, *McSweeney's*, and the nonprofit—complement each other so well. It's really a co-op in many ways.

## FORM

**It astounds me how much time is spent on areas and places that most publishers just ignore entirely. Why spend so much time doing things like writing the elaborate opening section, or having a story run on the spine?**

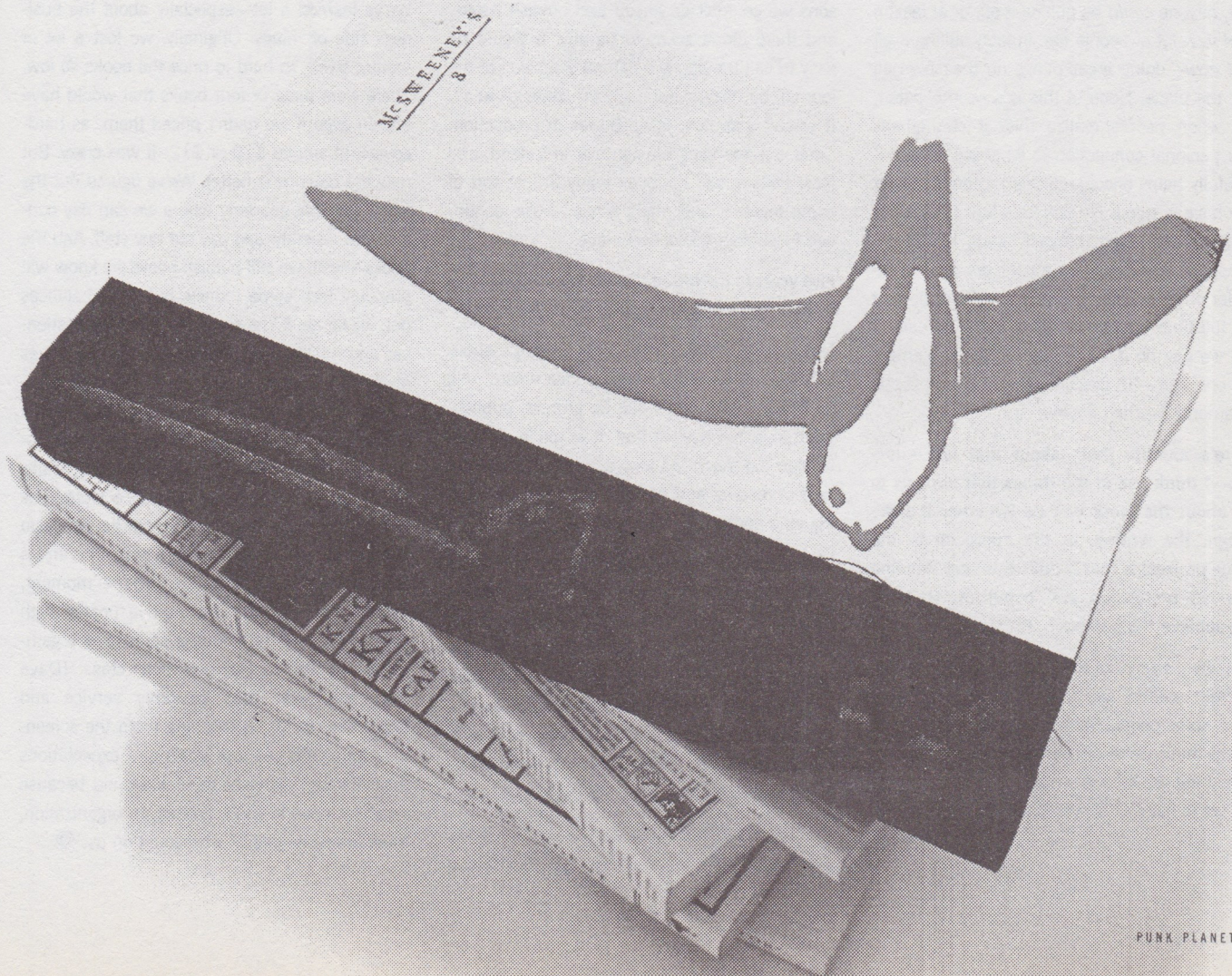
They always seem like a good idea at the time. And still do, mostly. The contributors write the stories; we have to burn our energy somewhere. Basically, the original philosophy was that if there was a blank space somewhere, we might as well fill it with text. And that's combined with Dave's general affection for very small type. We like having the journal look like someone touched every page; that in some way it's a hand-made thing, even though we print 17,000 copies of it. That's why it was so good when Lawrence Krauser hand-drew 10,000 covers, for example. The more detail, the more labor-intensive the books are, the more we feel we're repaying people's faith and trust in us.

**I'm curious about how *McSweeney's* always seems to be pushing boundaries in the actual printed form. Things like moving from paperback to hardback, experimenting with size, shape, and binding, typing in gatefolds, or having full-color on book weight paper. How do you see experimentation in form fitting into the whole picture?**

Trying new things is a big part of what we do. Usually, we just have ideas, ideas that lots of people probably have, like "Why not make this color?" or "What if this were shaped funny?" and then we find a way to bring those ideas into reality. We call the guys in Iceland, and they say

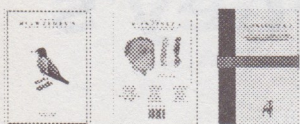
# mcsweeney's

"THEY ALWAYS SEEM LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME. AND STILL DO, MOSTLY."



something like, "Yes, eet eez possible, but . . ." And then we try to work out the numbers. Because our staff is so small, we can work the numbers on a book in a different way than most publishers—we can spend more on production, per book, while still charging readers less for it. We don't have any rigid formulas or anything, so with each book we start from scratch in terms of size, shape, materials, colors, everything.

**High-quality page design and beautiful typography seem to be very important as well, yet I love that you often point out that you're using "stolen fonts" or "borrowed software" (at least you did this early on). It's an interesting way of disarming the production values—a way of saying "Yeah, it looks nice, but we've got nothing you couldn't get your hands on too." I guess this is actually a two**



**part question. 1) why the commitment to such great design and 2) do you feel it's important to demonstrate that anyone could be pulling it off?**

Well, anyone *could* be pulling it off, or at least a lot of it. A lot of people are, in fact, pulling it off right now—doing great things on their own all over the place. None of this is so complicated, and when people realize this, it strengthens their personal connection to what we do and it hopefully helps encourage them to do whatever they have in mind. No one here has a degree in design. Dave taught himself Quark in college, and spent many years as a hack designer working for other publications before writing more or less full time. So our feeling is that if *he* can do it, if we can do it, using low-budget equipment and one font—98 percent of what we do is still Garamond 3—then anyone can.

**There's another thing about that last question—I think one of the things that appeals to me about the work you do (whether it's the design, the writing, or the approach to the whole project) is that it rides this very fine line between pretension and populism. How do you achieve the balance?**

Um, well, we try not to be pretentious. Probably different readers see that balance in different ways; some people think we're mainstream, and others think we're unbearably esoteric. It's not something we have a whole lot of control over. But we're happy if it works for you.

## FUTURE

**You can't be making money hand over fist at this. What makes you continue on?**

Not all that many people get into literary magazine publishing for the money. You do it because you like helping bring stuff into the world. It's fulfilling in that simple way. We help to bring a little attention to some writers who deserve attention; it's weird that there's room for a magazine like ours, but on the other hand it's pretty amazing that there are about a hundred very good literary magazines out there right now, and people are supporting all of them.

**What prompted the decision to move beyond McSweeney's quarterly and start publishing books as well?**

**"NONE OF THIS IS SO COMPLICATED, AND WHEN PEOPLE REALIZE THIS, IT STRENGTHENS THEIR PERSONAL CONNECTION TO WHAT WE DO AND IT HOPEFULLY HELPS ENCOURAGE THEM TO DO WHATEVER THEY HAVE IN MIND."**

It wasn't all that different from the journals, really. We started after we'd done Issue 5, which was a hardcover book. We tried to think of reasons we couldn't go ahead and publish books, and there didn't seem to be any. It would be easy to call the books a natural extension of the journal, but they're not really an extension at all. It wasn't a stretch. Issue 5 was in production, Dave was spending the summer in Iceland, and Neal Pollack had his book ready. It just sort of came together and made sense. We've continued to publish books ever since.

**Five years in the future, do you see McSweeney's as mainly a book publisher or mainly a journal?**

Not mainly either, really. Right now it's about 50-50, and we really have no idea where we'll be in five years. We'll still be around, publishing things, but beyond that, it would be difficult to plan too much. As long as we have the support of readers and bookstores, we'll keep acting as a conduit for good writing.

**How does 826 Valencia fit in? To me, that's one of the most exciting things about you all. Instead of turning all your profits around and reinvesting in more publishing (which, of course, you are doing to a large degree), you have also done something that I don't think any other indie publisher has done, in starting your own youth writing center. Do you see 826 Valencia as an extension of McSweeney's ideas and values?**

We do, really. You really should see the place. Every single day, we're working on publications

shoulder to shoulder with kids working on their homework. Our staff members teach fiction and journalism to local kids. Earlier today, Dave and a bunch of tutors had an editing session with a fifth grade class—they're finishing their own small magazine. Tonight Lee, our website editor, had his Photoshop class, full of high school kids. It's a good balance: The kids get a lot out of learning from working professionals, and the place is infinitely more alive when it's full of kids. The local writers, like Stephen Elliot and ZZ Packer, help out at 826, because they want to and frankly, we figure that if they live close by and have an hour here or there, they should. Overall, we try to provide a vibrant space for young people to learn, and being around a publishing atmosphere makes the experience all that more tangible.

**How has the way you approach the magazine changed over the years? And do you still expect the same things from it that you did starting out?**

We've learned a lot—especially about the business side of things. Originally, we lost a lot of money, trying so hard to price the books so low. There were three or four books that would have broken even if we hadn't priced them, as hardcovers, at around \$10 or \$12. It was crazy. But now the balance is better. We've figured out the math with the quarterly where we can pay contributors decently, and pay our tiny staff. And the books—well, we still publish books we know will probably lose some money, but it all balances out, we figure. ¶ The second part of the question: yes and no. It's very different. The quarterly was always a community thing—the product of a certain community and read by an extended version of that same community—but now that community's changed a bit. It goes back to 826, really. We're more engaged than we once were. The quarterly, started alone by a guy in his Brooklyn apartment, now helps support a nonprofit, and is housed in a building where, at the moment, there's a special ed class from a nearby high school, and they're writing a screenplay together—a sitcom based on their class (Dave Kneebone, who does customer service and accounting for us, is teaching them the screenplay form). So yes, our goals and expectations are different. We want to stick around because what we have is good, and as an organization, there are some people who count on us. ©

# Marrakesh

By Dave Eggers

From *You Shall Know Our Velocity*

WE AGREED TO GO TO THE MOUNTAINS. We took one more cab, about a block this time, to our car, and headed in the direction we'd last seen the mountains. Where were the mountains? They weren't visible from the city anymore; I drove us in the direction we thought them to be, past the buildings and the tall red walls separating the street from the compounds and castles and soon we were in a rural area, but we were lost.

It was midnight and we were lost in the wide flat land around the city. The air was cooling and the night was quiet. We drove back to the city and soon found a cabbie, sitting on his yellow Mercedes hood in an alleyway, at a café's outdoor checkered table, next to a group of men playing dominos.

We proposed paying him to lead us, he in his car and we in ours, to the mountains. He was skeptical. Hand grabbed a wad of bills from his thigh pocket and waved it near his ear. Idiot. The man raised a finger to us, asking us to wait, as he walked back to his table, where he conferred with the three men, all heavy-set and moustachioed. They looked over to us, all at once and then one at a time, then stared down at their hands, as the man continued.

"What are they talking about?" I asked.

"Directions maybe," Hand said, sitting on our hood.

The men went on, their discussions more heated now, staccato bursts of whispers hissed. One man pointed to another, who pointed angrily back at him. The first went through a doorway behind them, an eye on us, and emerged a minute later with a different jacket on. He walked down a side alley, without looking back, while our cabbie approached us, nodded, and got in his car and we in ours. I looked at Hand and he at me, and we both understood that something seemed not right.

Marrakesh is full of tiny alleys no wider than an elephant's ass, and through those we drove, I drove, much too quickly. The walls were no more than six inches from the car. Our rims scraped twice against curbs, planters. It was like driving through the halls of an apartment building. Dozens of times I doubted we'd fit through this or that entranceway, that we'd get stuck like a truck in a tunnel too tight. We

guessed and hoped and prayed for deliverance through the labyrinth, narrow and crumbling. Our car whined around the tightest of turns and squeezed through impossible corridors.

Residents stared from windows and doorways—did they? Were those faces or?—and those on the street stepped out of our way. We didn't see any other cars, this fact making our passage easier but more unsettling. Were we supposed to be here at all? We were the only two vehicles active in this part of the city, at this time of night.

Through the alleys we sped and then under an arch and suddenly we bled into a large square, high-walled but open. It was a hundred yards left and right, and there—holy shit—was a soccer game going on and we were driving through the middle of it, 15 young men yelling, thin and high-socked, right in front of us, after midnight. We were in the game. Our car was driving through their midfield, straight through, our car following his.

"Did you see that?" Hand asked.

I did.

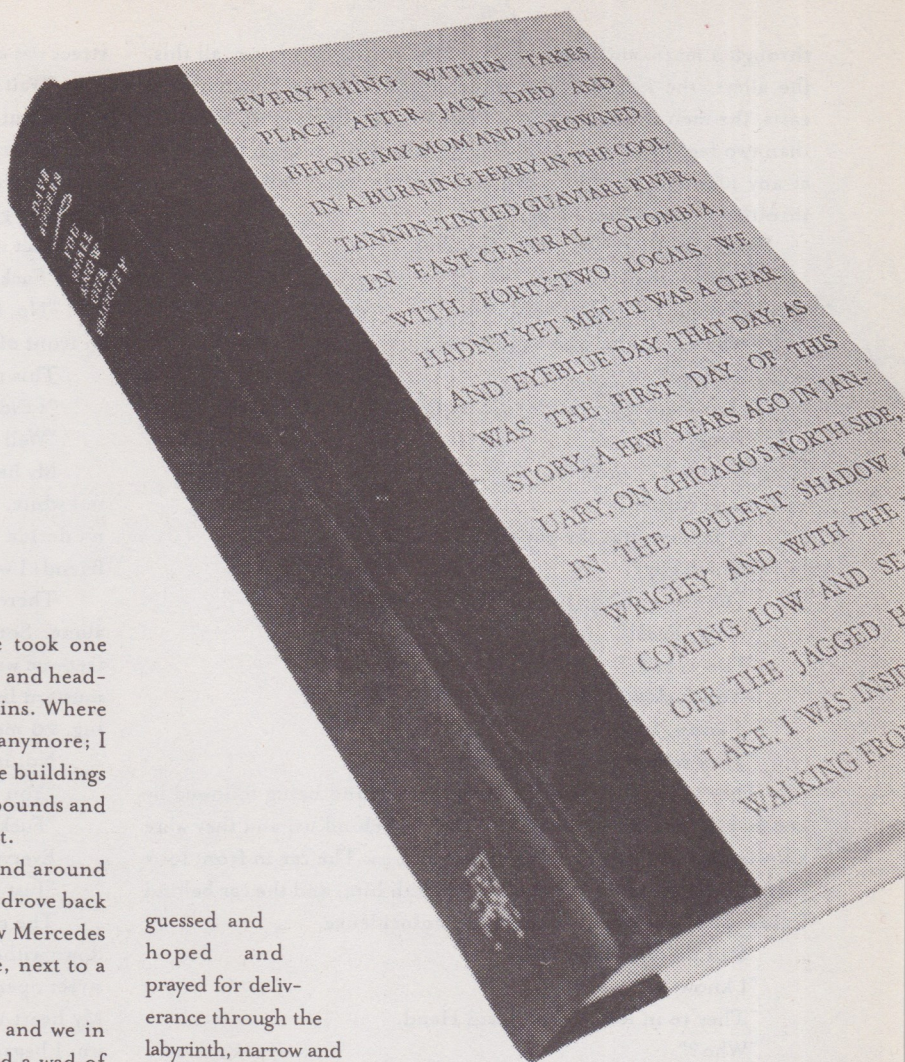
"We just drove through a fucking soccer game."

"At one in the morning."

"You are Ronin."

"I am Ronin."

Through a maze of high red-walled avenues, precisely as



through a maze, and—hell, this went on for half an hour, all this, the alleys, the narrow black stone streets with the men pushing carts, the men sitting on stoops, our two cars buzzing by, no more than two feet from their toes. It was exhilarating though I expected at any moment to be stopped and the car taken and both of us throttled or examined or both—

And now there was a car behind us.

"You see that?" I asked.

"The guy behind us? Shit. Yes."

"Why would there be a car behind us?"

"No idea."

"How many guys inside? Don't look."

"Two."

"Who is it? Don't look."

Hand turned.

"One looks like the guy from the café."

"Which guy?"

"The guy with the jacket. The one who went in and—"

"Okay. Fuck!"

"This is bad."

—You fucking imbecile, Hand.

—I know. I know.

"They're definitely following us," he said.

They were. We were following one car and being followed by another. There were two men in the car behind us, and they were allowing about 12 feet between them and us. The car in front took half a dozen turns, and we took them with him, and the car behind followed. There was no mistake, no coincidence.

"Still there," Hand said.

"I know!"

"They're in it together," said Hand.

"Who?"

"All of them. They're taking us somewhere. To a dead end. We won't be able to back up."

"Shut the fuck up."

My stomach felt grabbed and compressed. I had a fleeting stupid sense of relief that our French resister hadn't decided to join us. Because the future now seemed set: at some point, in a narrow alley, the car in front of us would stop and the car behind would close in and we'd be trapped and killed and disappeared.

It had been many minutes now. Maybe 20 turns. The men behind, barely recognizable in the dark, made no gestures, gave no hints. This was business.

"I can't believe this is happening," Hand said.

"Maybe it's not happening."

"Of course it is. We're the only three cars in this whole city. You see any other traffic?"

It was true. These two cars were here for us.

Hand rolled up his windows and pushed the car's automatic doorlock, the resulting sound a gun being cocked.

"Take a left somewhere. Get away," Hand said.

"I know, fucker," I said.

There was nowhere to turn. For all the choices we seemed to have, or the car ahead had, there were no choices at all. Every side

street was a dead end.

"Wait till the last second and then—"

"Shut up, Hand."

He grunted, and then was sticking his lower jaw out, rotating it like he was trying to get back into place. I'd never see him do that.

"Are you going to do it? I think we—"

"Let me think!" I said.

"Fuck it, man."

"No, fuck you! You're the stupid fuck who waved all the money in front of the guy."

This registered with Hand. He had no answer.

"I didn't say fuck you, I said fuck it."

"Well fuck yourself anyway," I said.

My hands gripped and regripped the wheel. My knuckles were not white, but red. I checked the mirror; they were there. I couldn't decide it if it would be easier or harder to die with your closest friend. I wanted to die first, that much I knew—

There were other men on the street, walking in pairs and alone. Some pushing carts. I worried about running over their feet—we were that close. We passed a crack of an alley, oozing with mustard light, where two men were embracing, with others watching, 20 men, at least—

No, it was a fight. One with a knife to the other's throat—

"You see that?" I asked.

"Fuck yeah I saw it."

Everything was wrong all at once.

"Just keep going."

The car behind hadn't let up. There was no way to even slow down without them hitting us. But where were we being taken? The street opened up. Then narrowed again. I couldn't deal anymore. My heart was humming, shaking. I almost wanted to stop, give it up. I began wondering if I was ready.

"Fuck," Hand said. "I can't believe this. You know what, though—I have to say, this is a pretty glamorous way to die. I mean—But will they shoot us or what?"

"Shut the fuck up."

"I swear I'll take one of them with me. What do they want? Our money, or the car? Both, I guess. Fuck!"

"Maybe we should turn off."

"We'd be dead if Jack was driving."

"That's nice."

Maybe I was ready to go.

I was so tired.

Maybe I wanted to be crushed, too. To be ready you need to be tired, and you need to have seen a great deal, or what you consider to have been a great deal—we all have such different capacities, are able to absorb and sustain vastly different quantities of visions and pain—and at that moment I started thinking that I had seen enough, that in general I'd had my fill and that in terms of visual stimulation the week thus far had shown me enough and that I was sated. The rock-running in Senegal was enough, the kids and their bonjours—that alone would prepare me for the end; if I couldn't be thankful enough having been there I was sick and ungrateful, and I would not be ungrateful,

not ever, I would always know the gifts given me, I would count them and keep them safe! I had had so much so I would be able to face the knife in the alley and accept it all, smiling serenely, thankful that I'd be taken while riding the very crest of everything. I had been on a plane! A tiny percentage of all those who'd ever lived would ever be on an airplane—and had seen Africa rushing at me like something alive and furious. I could be taken and eaten by these wet alleyways without protest.

The car behind seemed ready to ram us. It was so close we could hear its engine roaring over ours.

Suddenly Hand was yelling, almost crying.

"I hate this. [Hitting side window] I hate this! I feel closed in! I hate having no options!"

The turns were increasing.

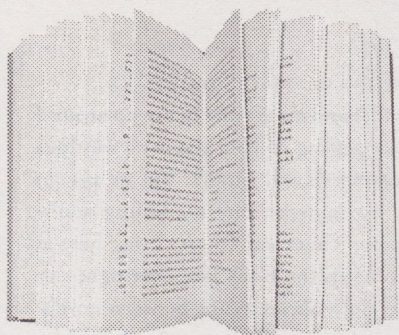
—Jack I need—

—

"I hate being followed like this! I fucking hate it." Hand was hitting the dash now.

"Easy," I said.

"Fuck you, easy!"



—Jack.

—

"We could stop and get out and just run for it," I said.

Hand mulled this.

"OK," he said, calming. "That's an option. I like that. We could always just bang on the door to some house and get help."

"Right."

"How close are they now?"

"Still right behind us." I looked into their faces, both with mustaches, both expressionless. I turned quickly back. This was very real. This was our lives, the whole of our relatively straightforward lives, concluding savagely on this bizarre note, someone splicing onto our happy safe Wisconsin lives the wrong, bloody ending. This is Hand's fault. How? I don't know. You'll fight together. We'll be led into some pitchblack alley, some warehouse. We'll be stripped, robbed, beaten, flayed—you will disappear. You're not afraid. I know. Why? You used to fear death so tangibly. When you were Robotman you would wait till dawn to ensure no one took you while you were asleep. You cried during the astronomy unit when Mr. Geoghan talked about how brief our lives were comparatively, how brief was all mankind. I know. I couldn't hear it. When they

talked about the imminent death of our sun, I lost it. And remember what he said, the first day of class? I do.

"Will."

He said: 'The only infallible truth of our lives is that everything we love in life will be taken from us.' He had just lost his wife. That was it. It was. He had lost his wife and came to class each day in a sweatsuit, royal blue with white stripes. He was a marathoner.

"Will."

I remember. I remember it being somehow soothing.

"Will, motherfucker."

"What? What?"

We had to slow past a group of men, and one pounded the car.

"I hate this shit! The not knowing! Why the fuck are they banging?"

There were a lot of butchers for some reason, men in white bloody aprons, pushing tin carts, knives and cleavers hanging from the cart's handle.

"This just makes no sense," Hand said.

"I know."

"The fact that we're not already dead is the most totally illogical thing. We should have been dead by now."

MY HANDS GRIPPED AND REGRIPPED THE WHEEL. MY KNUCKLES WERE NOT WHITE, BUT RED. I CHECKED THE MIRROR; THEY WERE THERE. I COULDN'T DECIDE IF IT WOULD BE EASIER OR HARDER TO DIE WITH YOUR CLOSEST FRIEND. I WANTED TO DIE FIRST, THAT MUCH I KNEW.

"If there was any sense to anything, we wouldn't be here at all. We have to just wait."

Hand snorted.

"I'm not here to wait," he said. "Where are they now?"

"You look."

Hand turned around.

"They're gone!"

"What?" I looked in his rear-view mirror. "Holy shit." I looked again. "They're gone. That is amazing. Why are they gone?"

We were out of the narrow road, the walls spread; we were again on the open road, the sky open and proud.

"I really thought we were in trouble there," Hand said.

"You know, I actually think we were."

Seconds later the cabbie stopped his car. We pulled up to him. I was still jittery, half-expecting some kind of ambush. He didn't get out. He just pointed up, with his whole arm, like semaphore—this road, he indicated, all the way.

Hand paid him \$100, even while we wondered if he'd intended to kill or rob us moments before. We drove a mile in silence and finally stopped on the shoulder. I rested my head on the side window. The car wheezed. I turned it off.

"Sorry," I said. "I thought—"

He stared out for a minute.

THEN WE WERE CLIMBING, THE ROAD WAS AND WE WITH IT, OUR PATH WINDING AND WITHOUT GUARDRAILS. WE KNEW WE WERE IN THE MOUNTAINS WHEN THE AIR WENT COLD AND WHEN OUR HEADLIGHTS ILLUMINATED THE TOPS OF TREES, THEIR BRITTLE LEAVES PEAKING FROM BELOW ROAD LEVEL, GREY PHOTOGRAPHS OF BRANCHES IN OUR PASSING FLASHES.

"Forget it," he said.

"You still want to go?"

"We should. I'll drive."

We got out and the air was cold and the hood hummed. We switched seats and Hand drove. Toward the mountain another 10 minutes. No people anywhere, no movement.

"What did you think would happen?" Hand asked.

"I thought we'd watch each other die," I said.

The air was cooling more. The road inclined.

"I'd want to die first," he said.

"Let's not do this," I said. I must have killed those men a hundred times in those minutes. "I'm worn out."

We went on, in a few minutes stopping for gas at a brilliantly lighted station staffed by a huge blue-overalled black man—the first and only black man we'd seen or would see in Morocco—and with his mustache he very much looked like a walrus, a walrus wearing a blue jumpsuit. I went in to use the restroom and inside were three men watching TV. One said something as I left.

"What'd he say?" Hand asked.

"I heard the words 'America' and 'whore.' I think. Add a predicate and I think he insulted us."

"This is just a weird thing, this night."

"You still want to go?"

"We should."

So we went up the mountain.

We switched seats, Hand driving now, but this wasn't the poor part of town. We kept thinking it would get poor but instead the road—as much as we could see in the unlighted road—was lined for 20 miles with perfect trees planted neatly, and high walls just beyond, left and right. Gated compound after gated compound, a few clearly marked as resorts, and dozens more that were either immense private homes or military bases or huge hidden dens of intrigue—sex camps or subversive training centers or fantastic new labs where humans were being made from stem cells and extractions from ice-age holdovers. It wasn't clear to us, none of it, while speeding past, on the other side of their high and endless walls.

Then we were climbing, the road was and we with it, our path winding and without guardrails. We knew we were in the mountains when the air went cold and when our headlights illuminated the tops of trees, their brittle leaves peaking from below road level, grey photographs of branches in our passing flashes.

In the quiet dark hollow of our car, Hand was talking about the origin of AIDS, something about a truck route in Zaire. It all

started with truckers, he said. The

truck drivers were delivering some

kind of cloth, terrycloth, he thought,

up and down Zaire, and were stopping

in brothels, as truckers do, thus facilitat-

ing the spread of the virus. We found our-

selves over a bridge and knew we were very high above whatever we were crossing—water or dry chasm, we'd never know.

At the other side of the bridge, at one in the morning in these frozen black mountains we came upon two men in uniform, thumbs outstretched, hitchhiking. Their uniforms, different but familial, looked like military.

"Should we?" I asked.

"Man, I don't know. We've had too much tonight."

We passed them full of conflict and shame and drove up around six or seven more bends, the air getting so cool the car's windows seemed to stiffen and the sky tightened and shrank. But we saw no one. There were no shanties, no tents or tiny crumbling adobe homes. There was no one up here. There was no one living here at all, really—no one, at least, visible in the black taut overnight—no weak fires warming peasants, no clotheslines strung between hovels.

We parked on the shoulder and got out. It was 20 degrees colder up here, maybe 40 degrees, and we had no jackets. With 15 feet between us, we could barely see each other. Hand stood, fists in his pants, warming them. I stood, fingers entwined and resting on my head. We had no idea why we were here. There was no moon, no stars.

"We could drive over the side," Hand said.

"I thought of that," I said.

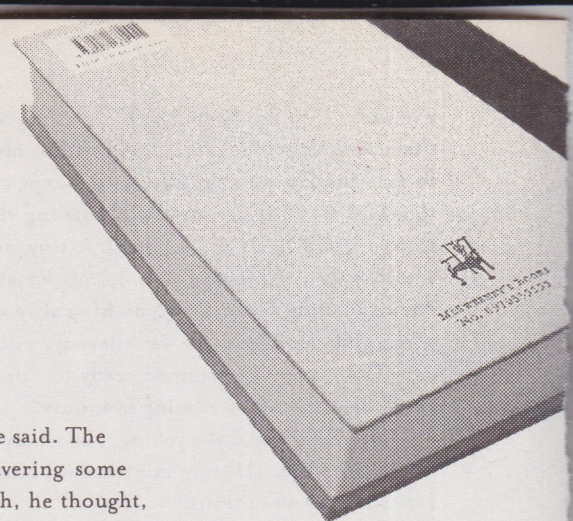
"If we picked the right place," he said, "the worst that would happen is we'd wreck the car."

"I know."

"It would be something to do. We'd run down a ways, hit a tree, get out, maybe meet up with those military guys and hitch back with them."

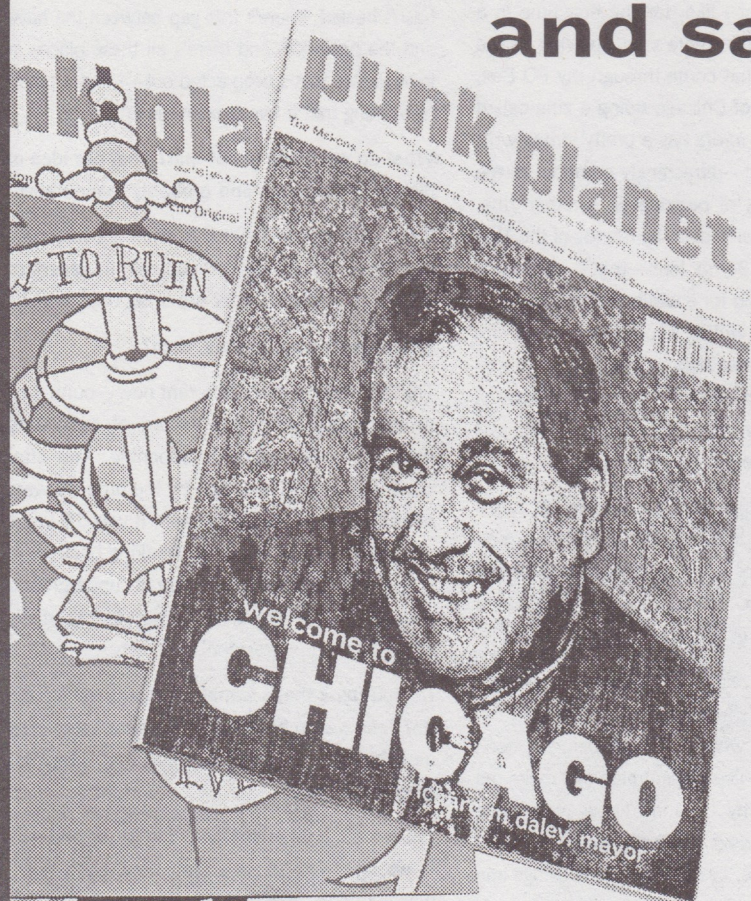
We stood for a minute and I noted that there was no sound. There were no animals, no people, not even wind pushing through trees. We stood on the mountain, what we figured might be the top of the mountain, and for a second I thought I heard water, but then didn't. There was nothing. We got back in the car.

We turned around and descended and drove quickly, back over the bridge high over the river canyon, past the military men again, still standing where we'd passed them, on the cusp of the bridge, and we rolled and down and down and they stayed there and we didn't know how they could stand the cold. ©



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**A** scam isn't just something you pull with salt water and a soda machine—it's a way of life. And for Iggy Scam, it's almost a higher calling. Besides essential side projects like the *949 Market* zine and the zine that comes with the Miami/Shotwell split LP—Iggy's currently riding the *Scam* zine anniversary pack, celebrating 10 years (and four monster issues) of the zine that gave him his name.

Just to recap: that's 10 years of squatting libraries, pushing a boombox blasting Black Flag around in a shopping cart, dragging a bike cross-country to make a wedding, playing in countless killer bands (Chickenhead still rules all), putting out a comp tape or two for the glory of the region, appearing in some short films, and even doing a few bits for National Public Radio.

His style—and handwriting—are as immediately compelling and distinctive as anything by Grandpa Cometbus, but Iggy's Studs-Terkel-gone-downer-and-outer instinct for non-fiction has led him into some of the best reportage going, from zineland all the way up to the mainstream dailies who cribbed some incriminating quotes by the mayor of San Francisco out of Iggy's (and comrade Ivy's) news-zine *The Turd-Filled Donut*. Someday, there's gonna be an Iggy Scam wing of a public library, filled with all the stories no one else bothered writing down: somebody like Greil Marcus might get a paycheck out of writing about "secret history," but Iggy's never known any other kind.

Interview by Chris Ziegler

**What was the first zine that made you realize what a zine was?**

I don't know if people consider *Maximum Rock'n'Roll* to be a zine, but it definitely at one time felt more underground than it does now. But that may be how I felt back when I lived in a small town, not in the town where it comes from, where I'm drinking beer in the kitchen with the moderator. There was a time me and the kids in the small town in Florida I grew up in sort of thought we were the last punks. Every once in a while, the Circle Jerks would come through Miami, but there was nothing else going on—we'd get a Black Flag record in 1987 and find out they broke up in 1986. It was like, "I guess nothing's happening—we're the last people left who like this music." And then one time *MRR* showed up on the shelves of the local chainstore—it instantly changed our lives; got us hooked up with everyone else in the

country. *MRR* was a lot smaller then—they reviewed demos in the review section—but it felt like a real big deal to be connected with that. And they had a pretty good run of columnists for a while: Ben Weasel, Jennifer Blowdrier, Sam McPheeters. It all seemed pretty diverse.

**Who do you think are the heirs to that line-up? Who do you think are the strongest new writers involved with punk?**

I've felt like that in the past year or so, I've seen a lot of zines that I like, for the first time in a while. It seems like there's an upswing in the quality of zines that come through my PO Box. A young kid out of Chicago doing a zine called *War Against The Idiots* has a pretty strong writing voice for a kid—refreshingly pompous in the right ways. A lot of personality. Another zine, *Myxine*, out of Pensacola, by friends of the This Bike Is A Pipe Bomb kids—that's somebody who's been around for a while, who had a lot of really thoughtful writing about the protests the last couple of years. They're paying attention to the idea of documenting things for history, keeping an account of what's going on. Not just propaganda or being a cheerleader.

**I think that's something you tend to do, too—the later *Scams* and the Miami/Shotwell zine are documents of a lot of history that would otherwise be lost. Where's that impulse come from? Squatting in libraries?**

I've always been really interested in the places I live—maybe that's from squatting in general. You get curious as to who lived there before. I don't know why things like cement etchings make me feel insane or why I wanna know who wrote them, but I've always felt that's really important to pay attention to. I've tried to sneak things into the library here in San Francisco—I got ahold of a stamp that says "Property of the Library", so I can get things that I think are of historical note and sneak them into the places they need to go.

**What are some of your favorite stories that you've uncovered?**

Right now I'm working on the terrorist bombing history of San Francisco. Through the late '60s and all the way really until 1980, there was quite a bit of bombing from various groups in town. All pretty left-wing stuff, concentrated from '74 to '77. I spent a while digging stuff up about that, and it was really crazy stuff. There were a couple police stations bombed, most of the major hotels, a lot of stuff in the financial district, the opera

house—it was pretty much non-stop, and the police couldn't find anybody. A group called the New World Liberation Front was taking credit. These were pretty savvy bombings—no one was getting hurt but they got their message into the press. And nobody really knows about it, even though it was only 25 years ago. That's totally within a person's lifetime, and it's totally forgotten. So post-September 11, I was thinking about the idea that now more than ever we stand together, because *actually* there's this rift in this society that hasn't healed. There's this gap between the have and the have-nots and there's all these places in town where that's been acted out—I find it pretty fascinating that it hasn't been remembered.

**What do you think about that? That our idea of history is so fragile and probably inaccurate?**

If one zine editor decides it, then it's history—you have to decide for yourself if generator shows on Mission Street are a big deal or not.

**What about punk history, then?**

That's the thing that's different now—punk rock wasn't about keeping a record of everything because it was actually happening. And after punk was around so long—by the time we were hearing punk in my hometown, it was 10 years after 1977—people started thinking back on it. When something is a very vibrant underground culture, people aren't taking notes—especially when Reagan is president!

**Do you think that's something someone should do? Take a step back and document something as it happens? Or do you think that interferes with the energy?**

I'm not gonna say one way is right or one way is wrong. I like to save stuff now, but when I was younger, I didn't give a shit about any of it. Someone gave me a pile of *Slash* magazines, and I gave them away because I didn't care.

**Ever wonder if someone will be poring over something you've written or recorded in 2024?**

No, I don't. I just don't think about it directly—but it's good to keep a record in some way.

**What other projects are you working on besides *Scam*?**

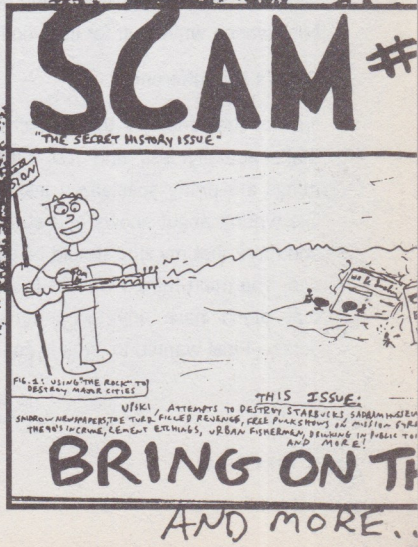
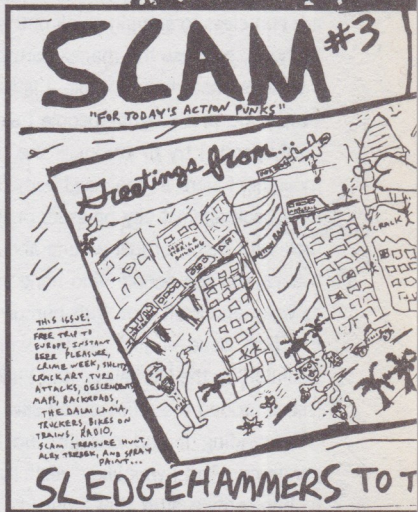
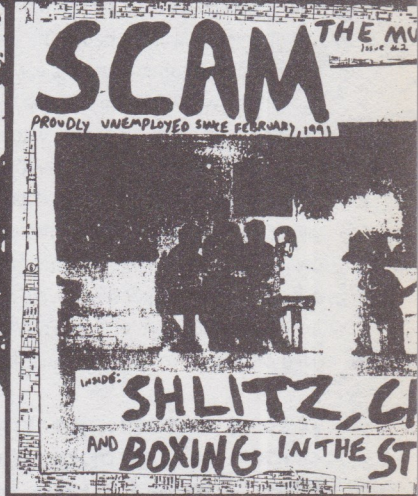
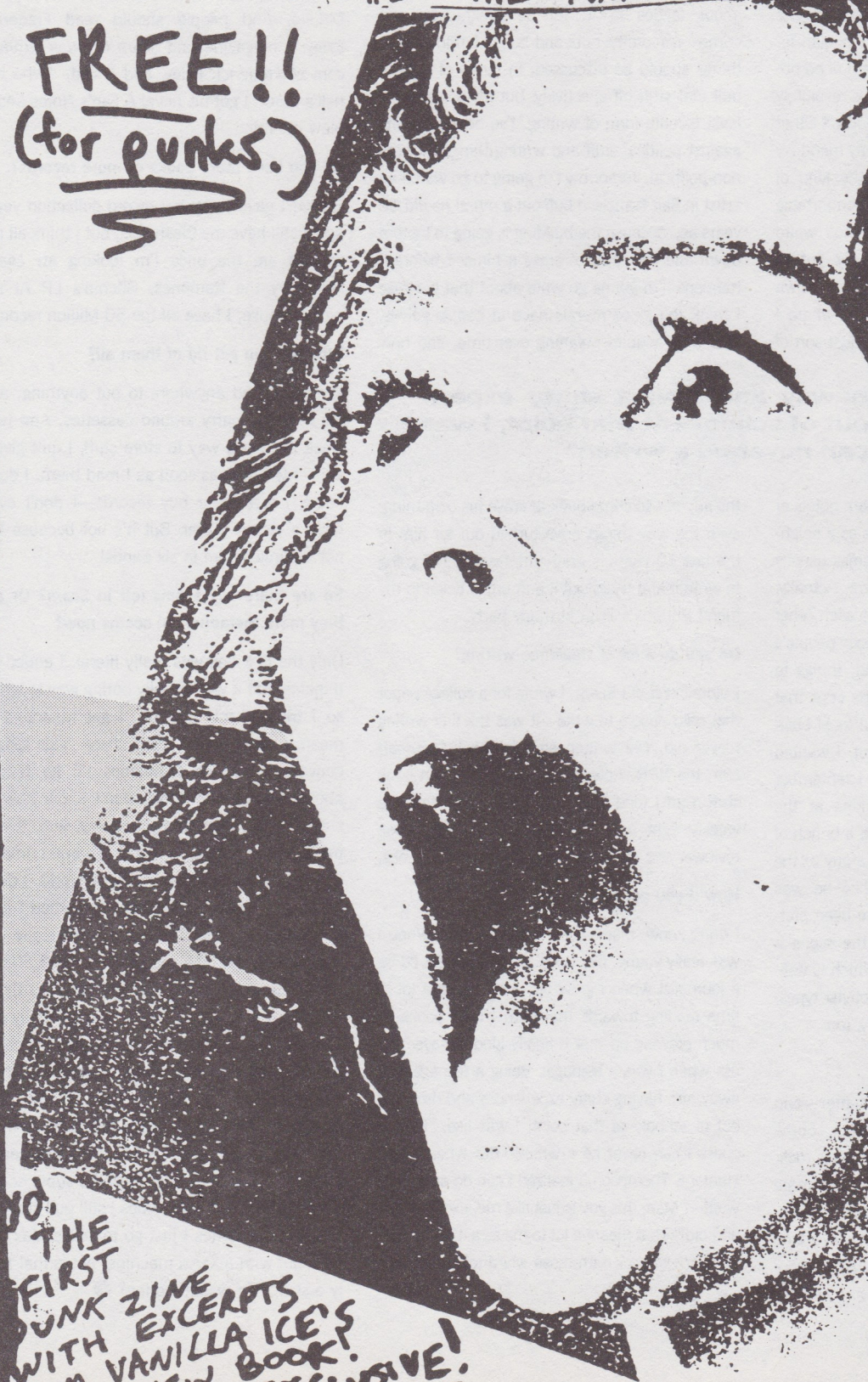
I'm working with a group of folks here in town, mostly punk rockers, to come up with ideas of what we want to do to completely shut down the city of San Francisco if a war starts in Iraq. There's a lot of folks around splitting up into

# SCAM

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groups to plan to make that happen. We don't condemn the breaking of windows, though—we decided to do something more about what we're for, rather than what we're against.

#### **Does that involve your writing at all?**

I'm part of the crew that will write something for that day—it'll be interesting to look back and see how it comes out. It's pretty morbid to plan for something that will happen in the event of bombing, but at the same time, this town is resolutely against the war. We'll see what develops. ¶ Other projects? I do a zine off and on with my friend Ivy called *The Turd-Filled Donut*—it's the kind of zine I wanted to make that I'd be comfortable giving to anybody. I know that sounds weird because it's called *The Turd-Filled Donut*, but it's primarily a newspaper that covers the downtown and Tenderloin part of San Francisco, where I lived off and on for a lot of years. It's just sort of

### **Being a teenage runaway and having shitty experiences and dropping out of school—at that point, I was like, "Fuck, I guess I can never be a writer!"**

an effort to get folks who live in welfare hotels or are homeless to actually think of this as a neighborhood, because the mainstream press usually just talks about how horrible it is here. Actually, people are pretty tight—people treat each other pretty good. I try to chronicle the poor people's movement here in the neighborhood, things to fight back against city pressure or the cops that fuck with them, or just writing about local businesses and the people who hang out. I wanted to write about all that with humor. I remember the first issue—I just started working at the Coalition for the Homeless, and I laid a bunch of issues around the office, and I saw a guy at the desk reading it and cracking up like he was gonna cry. And I was like, "Yes!" I've been pretty into writing stuff that's outside the scene a lot—I'm working on a new *Scam*, which is definitely intended for punk rock and activist types, but I wanna write stuff for everybody, too.

#### **What's the difference?**

It's not the tone, it's the subject matter—and that's actually less and less different. Some things are pretty specialized inside punk rock, like writing about shows and stuff. I feel more and more that my zine should be open to everyone. The main thing I wanted to do was a zine that didn't have any self-criminalizing anecdotes—I just wanted to write in general, and not

worry if someone wanted to turn me in. I wouldn't feel comfortable giving *Scam* to just anybody.

#### **What's your favorite kind of writing? You've done everything from interviews to personal narratives to historical research.**

I don't know. The new *Scam* has a lot of writing about tactics in it, for demonstrations and crime—it's pretty nuts-and-bolts. I think those things should be discussed, in terms of how to pull that stuff off effectively, but it's actually my least favorite form of writing. I've been rebelling against political stuff and writing things that are non-political. Tomorrow I'm going to go watch an artist in San Francisco buff out a mural he did 10 years ago because the building is going to be torn down and he wants to erase it himself before it happens. I'm gonna go write about that because I think the place murals have in people's lives, how they acquire meaning over time, and how

the guy has to come back to erase his own thing, even the way things have turned out for him in the last 10 years is pretty interesting. I'm going to write it and try to sell it and buy a ticket to my friend Buddha's 30th birthday party.

#### **Do you do a lot of freelance writing?**

Before I ever did *Scam*, I wrote for a college paper that paid people to write—it was the first writing I ever did. I've written stuff for *This American Life*, the NPR show—mostly all pretty non-punk stuff. And I kind of got the hook-up at the free weekly right now. My dream is to be a book reviewer and make my living off reviewing books.

#### **How'd you get so scholarly?**

I don't know, man—I just read like hell! When I was really young, like 10, I always thought I'd be a journalist when I grew up, and I spent a lot of time reading towards that end. I read books so much growing up that it finally kind of saved my ass when I was a teenager. Being a teenage runaway and having shitty experiences and dropping out of school—at that point, I was like, "Fuck, I guess I can never be a writer!" But when I read Hunter S Thompson, I realized I can do anything I want—"Man, this guy is just like me, except weird and old!" That meant a lot to me as a 13-year-old. It got me to stick with those weird role models.

#### **Who else?**

Nelson Algren is someone I'm a huge fan of. He wrote really great novels and short stories about the down-and-outs. For non-fiction—not influences, maybe, but stuff that inspires me—there's a guy named Joseph Mitchell. He wrote for 60 years for the *New Yorker*, really incredible sharp essays. For modern stuff, I'm into Don DeLillo. And people should read Frederick Exley. A magazine said *Scam* #3 was reminiscent of Frederick Exley, and I said, "Who the hell's that?" I got his novel *A Fan's Notes* and it blew my mind.

#### **Do you have more books or more records?**

Books! I gave away my record collection years ago. I still have my Clash 45s, but I think all my records are the ones I'm looking at: *Leave Home* by the Ramones, Bitchin's LP. At my mom's house, I have all the 50 Million records.

#### **Why did you get rid of them all?**

I've never had anywhere to put anything, and it's easier to carry around cassettes. And now since I've got a way to store stuff, I quit giving away my books as soon as I read them. I don't know, I just never buy records—I don't even have a record player. But it's not because I'm not a punker—I'm in six bands!

#### **So are there any scams left in *Scam*? Or are they more metaphorical scams now?**

Only the first one was really literal. I ended up thinking that it was a really boring way to write, so I tried to mix stuff in. I get frustrated—I mean, I don't have a lot of these "kids today" conversations, but sometimes I'll be talking about, "These kids today don't know how to steal!" When I got into scamming stuff, it was more about learning how things work: crime as a way to figure out how the world works. I don't know much about computers, but when I read about hacker kids, it seems they're really just into finding out how the systems work. That's what scamming is—it's nice when you figure something out. It's exciting—"Wow, I really can Xerox a bus ticket and travel around the country on it!" So a lot of times, I run into people who steal from Barnes and Noble and Starbucks—just as the world has become more corporate, scamming has become more corporate, too. I don't consider myself a super scammer anymore, but sometimes I still pull stuff off. I mean, sometimes I just go to Office Max and walk out with a Xerox machine, but is that really a scam? Or was it looting? ☺



# MARKET STREET

By Iggy Scam From the zine 949 Market.

**W**E WANTED TO DO SHOWS, events, art, anything that was more about what we are *for* than what we are against. I'm not saying we shouldn't protest; George Bush will certainly keep our hands full with that for these next four years. I'm just saying that I'm tired of being expected to self-identify as someone under attack, someone powerless, someone who is being forced out. We wanted to do shows that asked, "What do we *want* The City to look like? How can we make it happen? If we really had all the space everyone says they need to do stuff, what exactly *would* we do with it?" We wanted to do shows that remind people of the power they actually *do* have.

We had weekly meetings to generate ideas. What about doing illegal murals in broad daylight that were so big that everyone would just *assume* they were legal? What about breaking into evicted Mission houses and having punk shows and bringing kegs and spray paint? We're trying to come up with ideas of how to take public visual space away from for-profit advertising, how to take stock of for-profit real estate speculation.

You might think it is easier to meet and come up with these ideas than to actually carry them out. However, when I reached my sixth month of having no home and considered my dwindling prospects, I was reminded of how decisive action is so much easier when you don't have any options. When I heard about a vacant, two-story Victorian with electricity and running water on sunny Shotwell Street in the Mission that was scheduled to be torn down, I cheerfully dusted off the old crowbar and bolt cutters and, a couple days later, I had a new place to live.

There is really no such thing as an abandoned building in the Mission these days. Every precious square foot is priced, taxed, owned, rented, coveted, and, ultimately, police-protected. But this turn-of-the-century Victorian with fancy old wood floors was, according to the work permit stapled to the front, to be gutted and turned into an expensive, one-story lofty-cube with a massive

parking garage. Only the historic façade would remain, leaving a feel-good SF postcard look that is, in fact, mandated by a strict preservation law. My dim hope was not that I could one day own the place through obscure squatter's rights, but that there would be a stock market crash, or an earthquake—something to derail the developer's plans or cause them to run out of money before they could start work. Earthquakes or stock market crashes or even the energy crisis; the inevitable shifts in history that market analysis have come to call "corrections."

Everyone has a dream about a space in this town, a dream that hinges on real estate. All I wanted out of my new squat was a quiet room to put a desk in so I could just sit and write, but the gutter-punks who moved into the upstairs unit were thinking much bigger. They printed out a copy of the so-called "adverse possession law" from the Internet and started making five- and 10-year plans. Looking out over the empty lot behind the squat, last week's 5th and Market Street drinkers were transformed by the dream. "We could turn this into a community garden!" they announced. "We'll build a fence and paint murals on it and turn this squat into a community art center where little kids can come after school and paint!" It was pretty ambitious, but what is a dream about space, but a dream about who we might be? What is a city, if not the aspirations of the people who live in it?

This, of course, made it especially poignant when our "community center" was rather unceremoniously evicted by a single cop and a handful of weathered, old, Irish construction workers a mere two weeks after we moved in. On eviction day, I was invited next door by the sympathetic neighbor who wanted to commiserate. "It's a shame," he said. "Those kids were dumb, but I kind of liked them. And what's going to happen in that space, anyway?!" They're going to gut the inside and take out all that history and just leave a *façade*?! What is that—a fucking Hollywood set or something?"

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*In early 2001, a group of kids took over an abandoned building on Market Street in downtown San Francisco, only a couple blocks away from the cable car turnaround. They spent weeks decorating the space with huge murals and then had an enormous opening night show, with four bands, tons of free food, speakers, and about 600 people in attendance all in a free, illegal space so obvious that no one thought it was illegal at all. Later, they continued to use the space for shows and several weeks of a Sunday-morning free breakfast and cafe. This piece was written in a magazine that was handed out on the space's opening night and reappears in 949 Market, the zine about the space's four-month life.*

We talked about his own work in the neighborhood. "I'm a builder. When I go into these old houses around here to work, I see how well made they are, how old the wood is, and it is overwhelming. I just think, a hundred years, like how much has *happened* there, how many people have *lived* in these homes. You ever think about that?"

I said I did, all the time. I thought about the Mission houses, built with trees brought over from New Zealand, because Northern California had already been deforested by the turn of the century. I thought about the different layers of time on these streets, all long gone, but also, all still there, at the same time, like rings in a tree.

He said "Yeah, but I've seen them *older* than that. Solid red-wood houses, with trees from right here. Well *over* a hundred years old. Think of *that*! Without that, it's just a Hollywood set."

## Part Two

Market Street. The shadowy heart of SF, the ultimate Hollywood set. Where faded office buildings from Sam Spade's day lurk and every luggage and shoe store, every down and out dentist office seems to be a front for something else. Where the buildings are worth more when they're hollow and empty with postcard shops in the ground floor. Where a buck will get you eight pictures of the Golden Gate Bridge or eight seconds in a room with a grainy porn movie. The land of drug baggies and cheap movies and fake IDs. Market Street: where everything is for sale, but none of it is something you can really own.

I soon found another place to stay that wasn't an abandoned building, but soon found myself, once again, helping break into an abandoned building to launch a dream. This time it was right here on Market Street, the site of this show.

We had been wondering about this space for years, really, but once inside, we weren't prepared for how great it really was. It was much bigger and better than we would have even hoped for. Practically a block-long room. We could do *anything* with it!

It was also in a perfect location, too. The guys in the alley out back didn't care if we had bolt cutters, and there were no other neighbors after dark. The block, like all of Market Street, really, had been mysteriously hollowing out for years, until even the sandwich shop and the ancient St. Francis Theater were the last businesses to go, earlier this year.

I spent an afternoon pouring over dusty books on the fifth floor of the library, finding a photo from 1925 that may indicate the space was once a piano company's showroom, but it's hard to tell. I was definitely able to chart the history of 949 Market through 65 years of tenants, as far back as 1935 when SF Billiards apparently owned this site. Later, a 1948 ad in the San Francisco phone book announced, "SF Billiards. Largest in The West. We serve sandwiches and beer. Women welcome."

In the '50s the space had a couple year stint as the Vic Tanny Workout Gym, but health and fitness was never a big priority in Mid-Market, and soon it lapsed into its usual seediness as the home of Palace Billiards.

Palace Billiards used the spot until its doors closed for the last time, apparently in 1988. A sign taped to the countertop indoors announced, "Check newspapers for a new location." But there wasn't a new location and the only place the name "Palace Billiards" is known today is in the tiles in front of the space—tiles hidden by a roll-down door until tonight. During that time, 949 Market has been empty space for 13 years. Thirteen years of vacancy, probably some owner's tax revenue scam, where the big, empty room silently fills with dust as somewhere, outside of the city, a bank account fills silently with money. Thirteen years of people's dreams about a space.

What would you do with a block-long chunk of open space on Market Street? Is it more important to use it for housing, or entertainment? Would you spend a month working on a space that might only last for one night, and maybe not even that? Should it just be opened and used to do a massive feeding to the guys who live out back in the alley, or should it be used for a punk art show? Can a space that's illegally opened really be open to everyone, safely? What would you do with a block-long space on Market Street?

We asked 10 or 15 people to come down and look at the space and help us imagine what to do with it and then we went to work. The space needed everything, from power and lights to vacuums for all the dust. We found almost everything we needed right next door at the abandoned St. Francis Theater.

With flashlights and dust masks, we went on expeditions into the eerie silence of the old theater, out of the sun and swarm of Market Street and into a dark calm at mid-day. The theater unfolded before our flashlights like a movie, one shot at a time. A movie where we were the only survivors of a nuclear holocaust, or were beings from the future sent to investigate the past.

We searched for fuse boxes and water pipes to turn power and water on. We found ladders, light bulbs, cans of paint. Curtains, old signs. An old theater sound system that we pulled out to re-wire to try to build a PA for our new space. A hose for water. Popcorn containers to serve free food in. Theater seats to sit in. Every piece of garbage in the old theater could, theoretically, be re-wired or rigged to build our space.

Slowly, out of the theater's past, a future developed in our space. We walked, even rode our bikes excitedly around the room, saying, "This is where we'll serve the food! This is where we'll paint! This is where we'll build a new theater!"

But, as the space began to take shape, I found myself spending more time exploring the old theater, savoring that feeling of walking out of a downtown day into the dark, into a place where time stands still. The feeling of going to the movies.

The poor old St Francis, screens dark forever after over 75 years of movies, and there wasn't even an article in the paper when it went down. It had started out as a silent movie house with a grand marquee, but its years on the main drag wore it down. In the 60s it still had its name in lights, down and out, but proud, like an old man leaving his SRO hotel room in his best suit and hat, to sit all day at a bus stop bench alone. But Market Street took that, too, and the theater wound out its days with second- and third-run films.

Cheap matinees, and theaters full of men with bottles, sleeping it off in a forever-darkened afternoon, while the feel-good hits of summers past spun off the reel into the past. Until time, at last, stood still.

Deeper and deeper into the theater I went, through layers of debris and history. I rummaged methodically through desks in management offices, finding family photos, receipts, licenses. Great piles of unsold tickets and pictures of half-assed graffiti tags on the theater's tired façade before it closed. I found a negative of a woman standing on the deck of a boat in a folded-up envelope with the questions for the US Citizenship Exam scrawled on it in English and Chinese.

In the projectionists room, I found reels and reels of film and used heroin rigs, hidden in a desk, and imagined a down-and-out Market Street projectionist on the nod in his secret room, while the projector fluttered and flickered in a sort-of REM sleep. There was film and syringes and an old Coca-Cola trailer that I unspooled and watched in the dark with my flashlight. In it, a cornucopia of fruit slowly turns into a sweating, fizzing Coke and a caption appears, one letter at a time. "It's the Real Thing."

Down in the basement, in silent rooms and narrow halls, deep under Market Street, I found silent movie projectors in mounds of dust. Marquee letters and old posters. Popcorn machines, broken. Cash registers from the 1920s, rusted shut. And, always, piles of film. Moldy films in rusty cans, never to be seen again.

I look at the piles of film, deep beneath Market Street, and think of a near-century of people sitting in the dark while movies showed. Sitting in the dark, dreaming. Mouths slightly open, waiting. People who took something with them out of the theater and into the crowds and half-light of shady Market Street. People waiting at crosswalks, watching fog come in. People leaning in doorways and falling asleep on trains, underground. I see the piles of unspoiled film on the projectionist room floor and think of a near-century's subconscious, spinning off the reel. Silent movies in the dark of the old St Francis, and the silent funeral march filing past the theater during the 1934 General Strike. Cop cars burning, cinematically, nearby after the Dan White verdict. Gulf War marches, Rodney King riots. Last century's subconscious ideas surfacing from the dark under the street, ideas fought for and acted out on Market Street.

I think of the ideas that could fill up a free, squatted space on Market Street, one mural at a time—that could fill up the whole city. You are reading this with the benefit of hindsight, knowing how the show turned out. But I still don't know if, in a few hours, our plans will work or if we'll get busted and arrested in minutes. I'm on Market Street, where the layers of history are all gone, but still there, like the rings in a tree. I'm in that crowd, leaning in doorways and falling asleep on trains. Underground. Waiting for the inevitable shift in history.

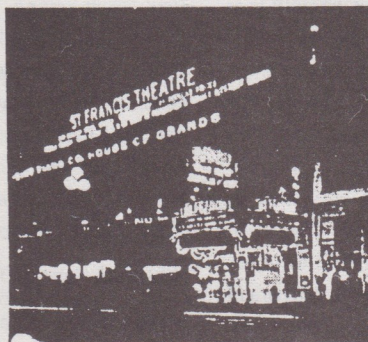
I'm in the front row at the St. Francis, in the dark, mouth open a little. Dreaming. ©

949 Market is available for \$2 from Tree Of Knowledge.



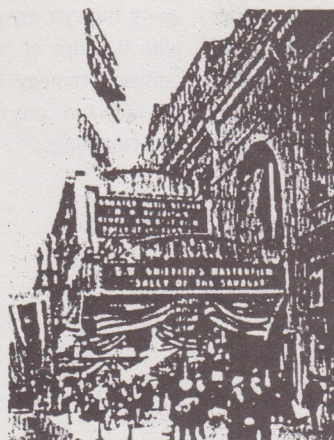
ST. FRANCIS THEATER  
1934 PHOTO

Deeper and deeper into the theater I went . .



ST. FRANCIS THEATER  
1923 PHOTO

. . . through layers of debris and history.



ST. FRANCIS  
1920'S

**T**he musicians—or should I say, the players—of bands that gain notoriety easily cruise on their crown of thorns into obscurity. “Music was my life, man,” is a common mantra as they claim odd jobs while the royalties squander away.

John Pierson, known best as Jughead from the seminal pop-punk band Screeching Weasel, could have faded into history after the band ended their 15 year career in 2001, but instead focused his attention on another love: theater.

Donning yet another pseudonym, Ian Pierce, Pierson wrote over a dozen plays and gained some fame in the tight-knit Chicago theater scene as an actor and playwright. He started performing with the acclaimed experimental theater company the Neo-Futurists, known best for their weekly show, *Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind*, where they perform 30 plays in 60 minutes. Now in his seventh year with the company, Pierson has ceased writing long form plays and instead publishes them.

His publishing company is called Hope and Nonthings and its mission is to publish works by punk rock musicians and Chicago actors and playwrights. Putting out works by former bandmate Ben Weasel to *Too Much Light* veteran and *This American Life* contributor Dave Awl to esteemed Chicago playwright Mickie Maher, Pierson runs his small press with the vigor and spirit of punk rock.

Interview by **Vincent Chung**

#### **How did you go from Jughead to Ian Pierce?**

I was actually involved with theater in high school. In the early days of Screeching Weasel—in '86 or '87—I was applying to Columbia College for theater. The two were always acquainted; I was always doing one or the other. I read a lot on tour, so it sparked me

with new ideas. I'd come back and start writing a new play. ¶ I started producing full-length plays in my last year of Columbia. I was just taking theatre and literature classes up until then. I never auditioned for roles because I was just there to learn and wasn't really thinking about acting or becoming an actor. I panicked because I had graduated before I even knew I graduated. One of the teachers allowed me to stage some of my writings while I was still there. He liked it and said it reminded him of experimental non-linear theater from the '60s—it was just thoughts and giving the actors strange and different motivations. He asked me to write something every semester after I had graduated to keep me writing. I formed a non-company at Columbia of actors I liked. We ventured out and took *Fragmented Veins* of Staci and Cayce to a storefront theater near Wicker Park called Eclipse. ¶ Later, I had a pretty big play in Chicago called *Living in the Present Tense*. Some people from The Neo-Futurists came and when they had auditions, they called me up. I hadn't seen their work before, but I went to see them and it fit my style. I tend to write short scenes and they write two-minute plays, so it worked out pretty well.

#### **When did Hope and Nonthings come about?**

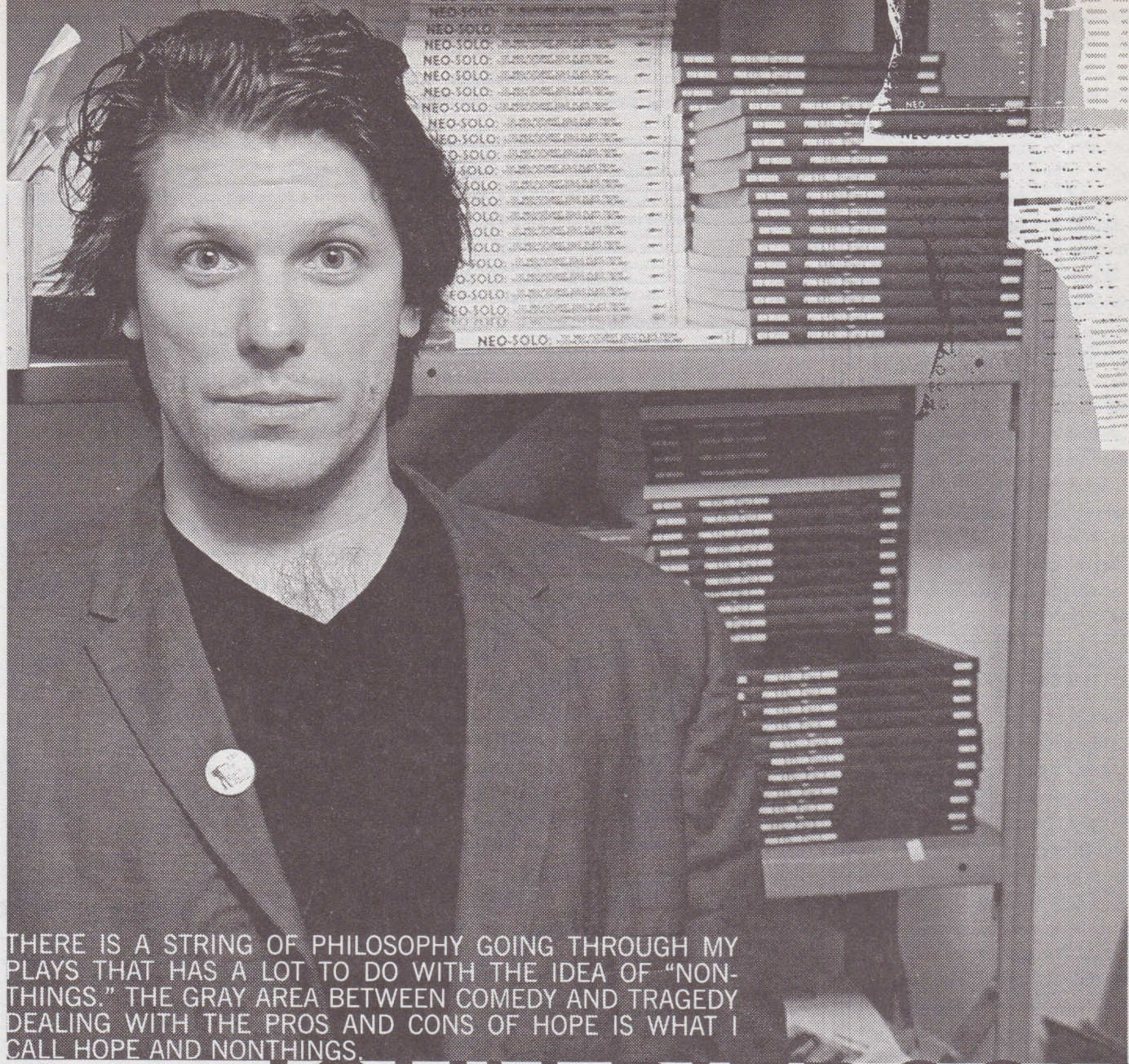
Nonthings started at Columbia. My first play was called *The Philosophy of Nonthings* because I was dealing with topics around the idea of existence and how you can feel like a “non-thing.” I didn't want to use “nonthings” because the idea of nothing is not existing at all. There is a string of philosophy going through my plays that has a lot to do with the idea of “nonthings.” The gray area between comedy and tragedy dealing with the pros and cons of hope is what I call Hope and Nonthings.

#### **How did you get into publishing books then? Did you know anything about the publishing world before?**

Before the band and theater, I worked on a novel. I studied a little about putting out books, but back then it was more difficult. Home computers were just starting. I had my computer/typewriter thing. There wasn't an easy way to make a file and then send it off to a publisher. I eventually lost interest because it was too difficult and expensive. ¶ With the Neo-Futurists, I wrote a couple plays and after one called *Simulticity*, I decided not to write plays anymore. I wanted to do something with this material, so I decided to put it in book form. I didn't want it to just disappear, because that happens to almost *all* theater in Chicago—it just disappears. There's been *great* plays done in the last 20 years that everyone talks about but no one has any of them. ¶ My idea was to put my book out myself. After I did, people who I admired thought it was an amazing task. There's something about having a notebook of paper and having a *book*—People put a lot more weight on the idea of having a book and think it's more important. Suddenly I was working on these books with these people whose work I respected.

#### **Such as? Who's on your roster now?**

We're putting out books by punkers and by playwrights: Ben Weasel, of course. We've put out his novel and essays from *Maximum Rock'n'roll*, *Jersey Beat*, and the other magazines he wrote for. He's actually working on a book now about Dr Frank from the Mr. T Experience. It might become a series based on conversations with musicians about songwriting. ¶ We're putting a Mykel Board book out. It's goddamn thick because it's all his essays from



THERE IS A STRING OF PHILOSOPHY GOING THROUGH MY PLAYS THAT HAS A LOT TO DO WITH THE IDEA OF "NON-THINGS." THE GRAY AREA BETWEEN COMEDY AND TRAGEDY DEALING WITH THE PROS AND CONS OF HOPE IS WHAT I CALL HOPE AND NONTHINGS.

# JOHN PIERSON

*Maximum Rock'n'roll*. He's one of those guys who can walk the line of throwing shock stuff at you, but not just for shock value. Everything that he says that's perceived as gross or shocking or perverted leads to a philosophical or ethical conclusion which sums up a way to live, which I think is great. ¶ Mickie Maher, who started Theater Oobleck. He's one of the more brilliant playwrights out of Chicago, and I'm not the only one to say that. Just from the book alone, there's already been five productions in places London and Texas—I'm proud of that. ¶ All the rest are by Neo-Futurists. ¶ This year's goal is to do either a continuing series with seven plays from different companies or one big book with plays from around 20 theater companies. ¶ I've also been working on a novel for about three or four years. I went to Italy to finish and actually what came out of it was me starting a new band [Even in Blackouts] and not finishing the book. It's about the whole 15 years of Screeching Weasel, but it's non-linear; it's very meta. If you enjoy meta-fiction, you'll like it. [laughs]

**Then how much of it is reality and how much of it is fiction?**

That's hard to say because it's about *that*, too. It's about my bad memory. The title is *Weasels in a Box* with the subtitle, *a novel of partially truthful situations with 80 percent fictitious dialogue*. Almost all of the dialogue is fictitious, but every situation in the book is based on reality. It gets very surreal, for instance a plane crash that didn't happen with us floating in space as sort of my ode to Rushdie's *Satanic Versus*. The book came out of me trying to figure out what the hell I was doing for 15 years and where I am now. It's more than "I need to chronicle my life down in words!" I'm a writer, that's what I do; I'm dealing with this psycho-

logical problem of what I did for 15 years and why it's over.

**Your mission is to publish material from punk rockers and playwrights. Why those two niches?**

I've always acquainted a lot of the punk rock world that I knew with how the Neo-Futurists run. The Neo-Futurists are run as a collective, so there's no one really in charge. It's people working together in a *real* do-it-yourself situation. It was definitely the same with the punk rock world I was in. We didn't have an agent and did everything ourselves. That's how I interpreted a lot of the theater world I saw. It's all about these groups of people finding a venue every time they have a show, just like a band. There's above-ground theater and there's below-ground theater, and the same goes for punk. What I deal with are the underground roots of both.

**Before doing Hope and Nonthings, you ran Panic Button records with Ben Weasel. Once you sold Panic Button to Lookout, you vowed never to operate another record label again. How is Hope and Nonthings different?**

I'm not one of those guys that's against capitalism, but it's not for me. There are things that I learned from that world that started happening once we went to a larger distributor. Once we switched to this new distributor, they wanted us to pay a record store \$1,000 to take 10 copies of the record and put it on an end cap. Basically we were paying record stores all this money, when back when we were distributed by Mordam we were selling more copies without having to do *anything*. A lot of promises were made about distributing to small stores weren't happening . . . it's just the type of thing that happens. We were so burdened with this money situation. We were looking at best friends like "Is this guy going to make us

enough to survive? Will he break a profit?" It was horrible! It came down to people like Chris Barrows from the Pink Lincolns who has been our friend forever, and here we are, talking about if we can put this guy's records out. I hated that. ¶ The publishing company is different because I don't take this as a business venture. The thing that comes first is getting someone's material out. I'm not even *considering* it to be a financial thing. Right now I price the books at enough to get by and for the people get a good enough royalty. The contract states that if they think that their writing could do better and someone wants to put it out, they can go immediately. I don't own *anything*. It's not really a company because I never officially made it a company. I wanted it to be more liquid, more flowing. It sort of becomes whatever I want it to.

**Do you see this "company" coming out of a need to have a DIY endeavor?**

I never think of things in terms of DIY. In fact, I never heard that term besides the Peter Gabriel song, "DIY," in the '70s or until people started throwing it around at the same time people started throwing around "pop-punk." It's just what I've been doing since I was little. I don't know if my Mom taught it to me, but I don't think of it in a political sense. I don't really consider Hope and Nonthings a DIY *anything*. It's in the thread of my being—I can't do it any other way. ©

MY IDEA WAS TO PUT MY BOOK OUT MYSELF. AFTER I DID, PEOPLE WHO I ADMIRERD THOUGHT IT WAS AN AMAZING TASK. THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT HAVING A NOTEBOOK OF PAPER AND HAVING A BOOK—PEOPLE PUT A LOT MORE WEIGHT ON THE IDEA OF HAVING A BOOK AND THINK IT'S MORE IMPORTANT.



# THE DESERT

BY JOHN PIERSON  
A CHAPTER FROM *WEASEL IN A BOX*

**I**N YOUR MIND there are miles and miles of haze for every inch of ground you have traveled for the last, what? Fifteen years, perhaps? Sure, 15 years sounds about right. There are hazes that have increased with the rising of the temperature, traveling through the desert, Arizona behind and in front of you. The Malibu is in danger of breaking down in the 120-degree temperature. There is no air-conditioner; the car's heater is at full; a technique often used on tours to keep the engine from overheating. This technique does not on the other hand protect the defenseless band members inside from hazardous levels of heat stroke. You roll down the window; the boiling wind hits the skin on your face and quickly begins to tear through levels of epidermis. Now you know what it's like when it rains needles. The humorous phrase from your first album gains new meaning as you roll the window back up. What kind of world are you in where you can't even enjoy the wind blowing in your face like a happy dog with no thoughts of destination or death in the process?

The Malibu, owned for years by a little old lady and bought by Mr Famous for \$2,000, had more personality and determination than all 13 members who have passed through the band like happy dogs with no thoughts of destination or death in the process. Ten thousand miles it traveled on that tour alone, a year earlier it traveled from Chicago to Berkeley, California and from Berkeley, California back to Chicago in less than a week. Of course you and Mr Famous made that trip too. Well, that's something to be determinably proud of; the Malibu is unfortunately long gone, but the two of you are still around like bewildered dogs with overwhelming thoughts of destination and death in the process.

The Chevy makes it to Phoenix a little after 4 am. Everyone grabs what they need for the small remainder of the night and heads to the door of the promoter, hoping that he is home, hoping that he is up, and hoping that he is cool enough to allow the band to crash on his floor. Being Semi-Famous, especially in the early stages of semi-fame, it is hard to determine whether or not a promoter cares a rat's ass about your band. From town to town, there seems to be no predicting the bands past or present affect on individual scenes. Will you have the same seven people show up to your show this time, or will hundreds of punks crawl out from beneath the surrounding suburbs just to see your band play? Sometimes it takes just one high school kid, searching through a bargain bin at the only local record store, to create a domino affect that turns a dead music town into a thriving punk scene. Sometimes a venue begins spontaneously in a kid's basement. Eventually it moves to a theater, bar, or a rented hall. The events become predictable. The social aspect begins to shadow over the energy of the music. The audience loses interest and the bands are no longer important. The "scene" shrinks, disappears. And the town is left with a hand full of punks searching for another place to begin the whole thing again. It is hard for the self-promoting bands to keep up with the constant shifts. You never know what to

expect as you walk up to the door of a new promoter. Mr Famous rings the bell; moments pass. Mr Famous rings the bell again. You hear footsteps, a crash, an "Ow! Fuck!" and then the door opens. The promoter, a kid by your standards, stares through the screen door.

"What the fuck?" he says, which is more of a bewildered greeting than a hostile exclamation.

You say, "We're the band, I'm Bunkbed, this here is Mr Famous, and those two boys sleeping on their feet over there are Vittles and Muddle."

Everyone stares at each other, a few moments of silence descends upon the scene for no real good reason. Mr Famous looks at you, you grin and shrug and then he talks into the screen, touching the wire net with his nose and lips.

"We drove all night, is it cool to crash here?"

"Fuck yeah, come on in."

Muddle rubs his eyes, fights a yawn. "Our car . . . it over-heated . . ." and before he can finish the word "heated," the yawn forces its way out of his mouth. He doesn't bother to finish the sentence as he enters the door and immediately falls to the floor with his sleeping bag.

## A FEW HOURS LATER

"Morning Sunshine"

Standing above Muddle and Vittles, the voice has given itself a frame; half silhouette and half bootcamp, drill sergeant. He is not to be confused with the promoter of last night, that fellow no longer exists, he was burned into a heap of compositable, undefinable ashes and instantly replaced by this Agile, Militant, Crew-cut Phoenician. He is possibly a roommate. The band will always remember him as "Morning Sunshine." He is one of the shiny happy people destined to kill others and perhaps even himself. Give the man a war before he turns the local mall into a rifle arcade/slaughterhouse.

Muddle, shocked awakes and jumps to his feet, rubs the crusts of sleep from his eyes with his left hand and clenches his right fist. You can see the veins in his forearms, his instincts teasing his brain. He holds back a punch, perhaps unsure about matching his strength against Sunshine's, or perhaps unwilling to put the band in jeopardy. Either abstention is possible, and it is more than likely that both happened side by side. Morning Sunshine smiles, says nothing more, and walks to the door swinging his keys. He turns toward Muddle and releases them. They spring forward and then stop like a yo-yo spinning in Muddles face. Muddle blinks to protect his eyes. The keys snap back into a retractable attachable belt receptacle that hangs on the side of Morning Sunshine's pants opposite the leather knife pouch. He Salutes. He exits. Morning Sunshine lives for an eternity in your brain. Muddle laughs to quiet his anger, and you, still under your quilt, laugh along with him. Vittles joins in. It is a good moment. ©



For so long, every zine I cracked open was filled with grainy Xerox graphics, boring band interviews or inane, journal-esque banter that read like verbal vomit. It almost seemed as though the zine community was slowly slipping further and further into a coma with every painfully-clichéd personal zine photocopied.

Then, as if a higher being heard my cries of woe, Ammi Emergency landed in my mailbox via her zine called—what else—*Emergency* and revived the slumbering genre of perzines. My faith in zines took refuge in her atypical stories of her punk-colored existence that didn't mirror the ego-tistical, self-serving material already out there.

Ammi's is the sort of writing one might expect to see in the *New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair* or some other highbrow publication that prides itself in "discovering" new authors. She could easily be touted by some literary agent as the latest in a roster of "fresh young talent." But instead, Ammi seems content self-publishing her small zine and staying connected with the punk rock community she holds close to her heart.

Interview by Amy Adoyzie

#### What motivated you to start *Emergency*?

I think I started writing a zine because I was trying to write *myself* back into my life, back into the world. I was at a really bad, miserable, alienated time in my life and I didn't know where I wanted to go or who I wanted to be. Writing just seemed like this opportunity to respond to the world around me, to put myself into it really aggressively. But not that aggressively—nobody has to read what you write.

Did you do a lot of writing before the zine, or did making a zine force you to think, "OK, now I have to do this?"

I was one of those people who always thought that they're going to be a writer from the time they were a little kid, but I never really started writing until the later part of high school. I always wrote fiction back then. When I went to college, I took writing classes there and I wrote fiction a lot. I wanted to write those kind of contemporary short story pieces that would be published in literary magazines—but I slowly came to realize that nobody was ever going to read them, and that was for a good reason. I think that's what led me to zines and non-fiction.

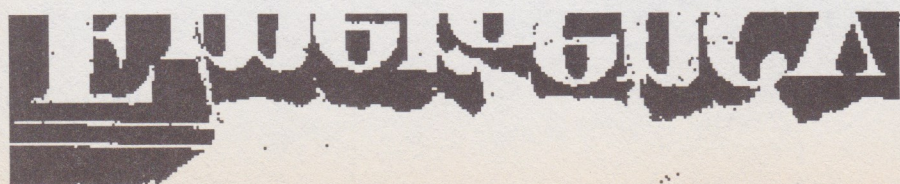
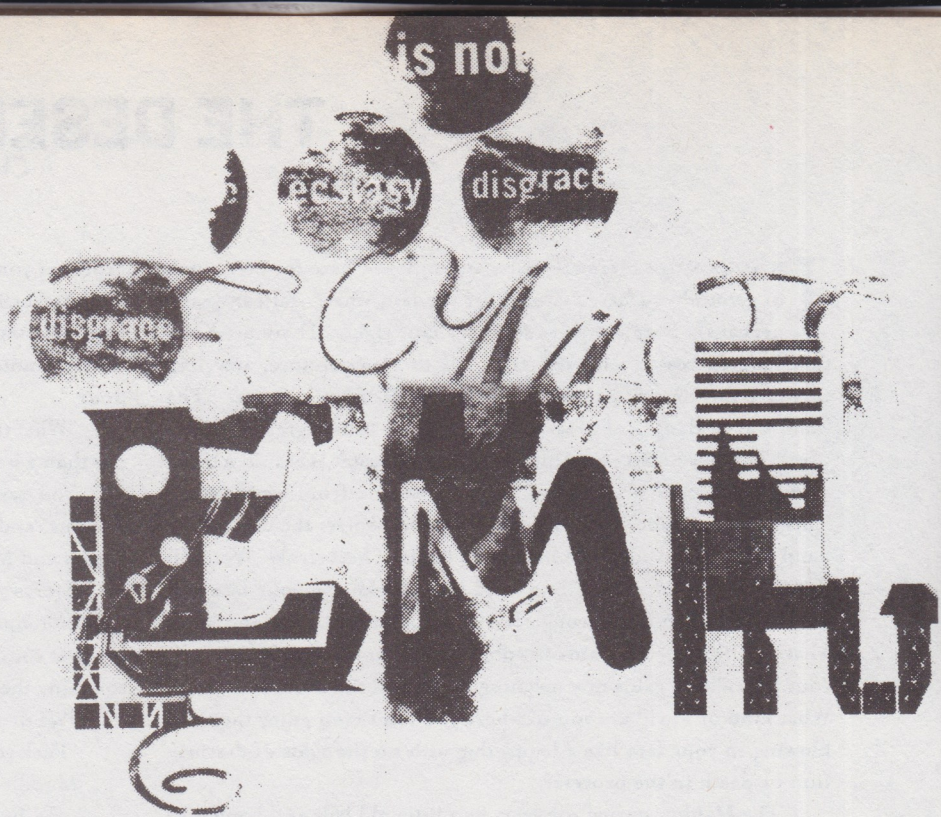
It's been about five years now since you started doing zines. Has your focus and the reason for doing a zine changed at all, or has it stayed the same?

It's changed a lot. When I first started writing a zine, I was writing primarily to strangers and I was trying to craft an identity and a place for myself in the world. Now that my zine is being read by people I know, in a lot of ways, there's a lot more pressure. One thing that I really liked about doing a zine in the beginning was the anonymity, and how that was creatively and emotionally freeing. I think writing zines for me continually is a challenge of how to live my own life. It's challenging in terms of both

writing and living. I read a review of my zine recently that said something like, "Ammi's zine is good, but that's because she has an interesting life. If I had an interesting life you would be reading more interesting stuff than just about my boring coffee drinking," or whatever it was. When I started doing a zine, I felt like it sort of my responsibility to try to take myself out of my own comfort level and do things that I've never done before because nobody wants to read about somebody who thinks that they are living a boring life. But also, all of our lives are boring and mundane. I'm trying to pull out the things that are beautiful and meaningful and to celebrate them and to sort of revel in how both their meaningfulness and meaninglessness are great.

Do you think *Emergency* is a vehicle to keep yourself sane?

There's this great Virginia Woolf quote that says, "Some people say they write to remember, I write to forget," and a lot of it is that. If there's something in my life that happened and I wanna move on somewhere, I feel as if I can't do that until I have written it down. Once I've written it down, I'm not going to forget it because there's a record, but at the same time I have made my peace with it.



NOBODY WANTS TO READ ABOUT SOMEBODY WHO THINKS THAT THEY ARE LIVING A BORING LIFE



One of the things that I really like about *Emergency* is the way you write about punk culture. There is a hint of romanticization of the scene but most of it is written in this nostalgically sour, bitter way.

I think it's a balance between celebrating the beautiful things about something and just critiquing and being disgusted by what's awful about it. The older and more jaded you get, it gets harder to celebrate things and be joyful about them than it is to criticize them. They're both important, obviously, but nobody wants to hear your criticism if there's no love there; it's all about loving things enough to be able to hate them.

**Or loving things enough to be able to criticize them to make it better.**

Yeah.

**Why do you make a zine as opposed to channeling your energy towards another medium, like making music or becoming a really prolific painter?**

With that, it's just about how a story comes to you: Images come to some people; music comes to some people; and sentences just pop into some people's heads—I'm one of those types. There are punk renaissance people who do all those things, and sometimes I envy the

hell out of them. But it just didn't happen that way for me.

**Why do you choose to do a zine rather than making an online version or a weblog?**

To me it's really a sensory thing. A lot of my wanting to do a zine and to travel is about wanting to be outdoors a lot and wanting to touch things that feel good in my hands. I like having things to hold in my hands, like a zine with a spray-painted cover, or a linocut- or woodblock-printed cover. Some people use ribbons or other kinds of beautiful ways to bind their zines. Or they use different papers. I like the look and feel of zines. I like how you can take them anywhere. The portability of zines makes them something that everyone can get their hands on.

**What are some factors in making a zine that you don't think you will ever fall out of love with?**

Getting letters from people who are in the same point in their lives as I was—especially getting letters from high school students who really feel trapped in their situations and for whom zines are a real lifeline. There are so many great things about zines. One of them is that every time you do a zine, it's not just about what you're writing, you're commenting on the form itself. It's like this continual conversation with

everyone else who does zines about what zines should and could be. I like being influenced by other zines; I like finding out that my zines influenced somebody.

**When I received *Emergency* four, I was sitting in front of my computer writing up the review for it. My boyfriend was over and he started looking through your zine. He was a little drunk when he read the intro and he started crying. Knowing that your zine can touch somebody like that, regardless of what the circumstances were, it's really gotta encourage you to continue.**

Wow. Yeah, it's pretty phenomenal. I feel like so many people who write really amazing zines would be rotting away somewhere writing amazing stuff that nobody would ever read without the zine world. Zine are like a book that you can jump inside; they're like a living literature. They may not have all the best aspects of a great book, but you can actually enter the world of them. And I don't just mean writing to the people who wrote the zine, or visiting places that they visited, I mean that you can realize that you live in the same universe and that you're life, whether or not you admit it or write it down, is as meaningful and difficult and beautiful. ©

# MONSTERS

## From Emergency #4

By Ammi Emergency

**T**HERE ARE INDIGENOUS tribes in Central America who believe that time is shaped like a spiral. That everything really does come back around. I sometimes feel like I'm dropping and forgetting things everywhere—friendships, possessions, obsessions and fears. But then life loops back in on itself and I manage to pick them up, to return and leave with another set of heartaches and fascinations only half answered. It's beautiful. It hurts. But all in all, it's a sweet thing. So here is the latest issue of my zine, the story of finding one best friend and losing another forever. A story set inside the kind of life that loops and returns, and hopefully always will. Because this isn't over yet. *Rest in Peace Sera, you will always be loved.* Michelle says, *grief never goes away. It just gets smaller.* Dana says, *people like us put all our eggs in one basket.* I say, *thank you for picking this up and for writing your own zines. For playing music and making pies and houses. You know who you are.*

Shanna says, *It's important to distinguish, when talking about monsters, between those people who you feel the need to demonize, and the others: Those that have always been and will always be monsters.*

Marisa may occupy the first category. Laura, the woman I bailed out of jail and took home to be my roommate, the second.

I first met Laura the previous spring, sitting at the bar beneath cranberry hair and a cranberry smile. I found her sad and smoky, trapped in layers of cars and lipsticks and elementary-teacher clothes. Laura would drink a bottle of red wine at night, then go in to teach early next morning. *Quiet reading time* was often the only thing standing between her and a shattering hangover headache, brought on by two dozen screaming six-year-olds. The kids loved Laura and accepted the frequency of *quiet reading time*. They put a "Miss" before her first name.

That was the Laura I knew the first week. By the third,



**I SOMETIMES FEEL LIKE I'M DROPPING AND FORGETTING THINGS EVERYWHERE—FRIENDSHIPS, POSSESSIONS, OBSESSIONS AND FEARS. BUT THEN LIFE LOOPS BACK IN ON ITSELF AND I MANAGE TO PICK THEM UP, TO RETURN AND LEAVE WITH ANOTHER SET OF HEARTACHES AND FASCINATIONS ONLY HALF ANSWERED**



with things I barely knew existed. Laura had this throaty, confessional voice, and when she finally turned to me, I realized how totally I'd been craving it.

"I'm so happy, Ammi."

Laura wasn't one of those existential troublemakers. When she was miserable you heard about it, repeatedly, exhaustively. But when she was content—when she wanted nothing—she said so and meant it. My friendship with her is one of the few places in my life where I've enjoyed, albeit briefly, absolute stillness.

We moved into the squat Tuesday morning. By Sunday the cops had come. ©

she'd quit her job and together with a friend, we'd move into a shotgun squat on Lesseps street, where we spent the happiest week of our lives. The backyard was a salad of green weeds, fleas like 10 shakes of pepper on the rough grasses and spindly willow leaves. We pinched off their heads and talked about patriarchy.

Laura and I would sit for hours on the back steps of that house, an open pack of menthol cigarettes between us on the splintery lip of the floor where a back door must have been. Sometimes an hour would pass before one of us spoke. It seemed so unnecessary in the twilight, her painting her toenails or writing in her journal, me watching the brown shadows slowly turn their faces towards the emerging night. The powdery blue sky would fade slowly to lavender, then flash salmon and all at once the jungle would flicker with the lime sparkle of fireflies. The air itself was tremulous and magical. We felt like guests in someone else's dream.

I think of Laura staring, unrepentant but full of reverence, into the bold scowl of night. And I remember feeling, for the first time in my life, as though I did not need to ask permission of anyone. Laura would watch the deep crooks in the willows for eons without blinking; the woman could make eye contact

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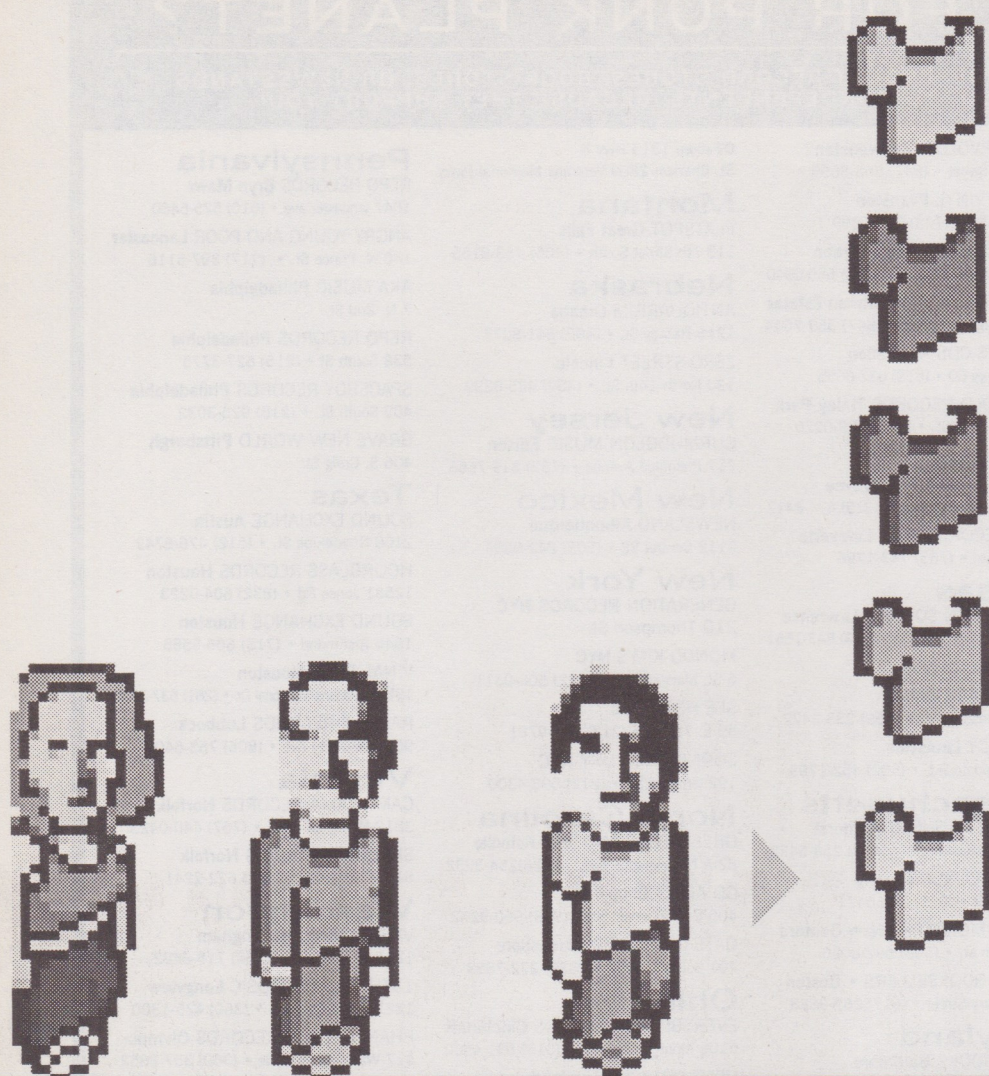
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**J**im Munroe knows where he's been. Making his start, like so many have before him, with zines, Munroe eventually found himself signed to a book deal with a major publishing house. However, his fling with the big-leagues didn't last long, as the Toronto-based writer decided he wanted to return to the independent press. He did so with a vengeance, forming the No Media Kings publishing company and releasing his next book, *Angry Young Spaceman*, for free on his website.

With the release of his new book, *Everyone in Silico*, Jim Munroe promotes the same disdain for corporate book publishers that major record labels have felt from critics in the punk community for decades. The book, which envisions a future "even more corporatized than our own" skewers corporate control over peo-

ple's lives in the present. Munroe, who was once the managing editor for *Adbusters* even took part in some culture jamming of his own with the novel by invoicing the corporations that appear in the book for product placement (he has yet to be paid by any of them).

While he's a talented writer and selling plenty of books is a goal, at his core Munroe just wants to spread the DIY love of self-publishing. As he puts it, "I make these books. I make them myself because media monopolies scare me. You should make one too." And with that, he's blazing a trail for new and innovative creators, leading a new wave of self-published-subversives onto the stage with the confidence to say, "You're not the boss of us!"

Interview by **Christopher Thinn**

**Your first book, *Flyboy Action Figure Comes with Gas Mask*, was published by a couple corporate presses. How did you find that experience?**

From the beginning I was uncomfortable with sort of being owned by Rupert Murdoch [who owns Harper-Collins, who published the book in Canada]. Then Harper Collins sold the rights to the American publication to Avon, which is a pretty big company, but I was like, "Well, they'll have good distribution and it's not owned by Rupert Murdoch. Awesome!" Then a couple weeks later Murdoch bought Avon! This media consolidation was happening right in front of my eyes. That was the turning point. It's one thing to choose to be published by a corporate publisher, and it's another to be *bought* into it. So I published the next book by myself, and I named the company in honor—or dishonor—of



# JIM MUNROE ►►► NO MEDIA KINGS

Rupert Murdoch: No Media Kings.

**What was the initial idea behind No Media Kings?**

My whole aim with it was to create a book that—except for the publishers logo—would be indistinguishable from a corporate book, in terms of gloss. I didn't want it to have the tell-tale signs of something that's self-published. When you self-publish, the pressure's up. You don't want to fuck up, because then people'll say, "Oh yeah . . . self-published." I was lucky because I had access to a whole variety of people I'd gathered from the zine community that were amazingly good at giving feedback, and who were very critical and helpful. So I already had editors, designers—a whole team of people to pull together something that could

make as big a splash as a corporate entity could. Because of that, I got way more media attention. A lot of that attention was centered on the fact that I was going from a corporate press to self-publishing—it was very much a man bites dog story. And, in the end, the independent book actually sold better than the corporate book!

**Does having to deal with promotion and the business end distract you from your writing?**

Being a person that likes the variety of tasks involved in book making, it's not like I turn on this crass, powerhouse-of-marketing brain. The same creative muscle that I apply to my writing I apply to the promotion. To me, it's not so separate.

**Do you feel as though your publishing is a valid political act?**

By not going with corporate presses, you're contributing to the fight against media consolidation, just by being independent. So, in a sense, there's an implicit politic. For instance, a book that is not terribly political in its content can be very political in its form, depending on how it's produced. And then you get other books that are very political but they're undercut by the fact that they're put out by corporate outlets; so, in a sense, it almost balances out sometimes. ¶ But does it *really* make change or does it just make celebrities out of anti-establishment types? On a number of occasions, people have said, "you know, you're in danger of becoming the No Media Kings media king." And I kind of agree—like I'd better not get too big with this. But then again, I

think [McSweeney's] Dave Eggers does a good job of walking the line between being huge and carrying on the punk ethic. He had a bestseller with his book *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, which came out on a major, but he published his second book himself. In fact, it was only available at independent bookstores—not with any chains. He's certainly not from punk rock, in terms of "the scene", but he has very similar ethics. I find that very exciting because it's not just coming from the punk circle, it's coming from elsewhere. ¶ Hypocrisy makes for a very quick poke. You have to think, "OK, what is the bigger picture, and what is the effect this person's actions are having?" Hypocrisy is the greatest vice in our society—we're all hypocritical! To me, I've always felt that I'd rather be a contradictory anarchist than a totally consistent liberal.

**You made your second novel, *Angry Young Spaceman*, available for free on your website. Do you think this helped or hindered your sales?**

I don't know. It's impossible to really track it. I don't think I lost any sales. A lot of people, for instance, came to the site when they heard

**A book that is not terribly political in its content can be very political in its form, depending on how it's produced. And then you get other books that are very political but they're undercut by the fact that they're put out by corporate outlets;**

there was a free book. And a lot of those people came back after they read the book and they bought the next book. To me, it's similar to when someone reads a book of yours in the library. I'm happy with that. It doesn't cost me anything. I love libraries. I certainly spend more time in the library than I do bookstores.

**Your newest project isn't a book at all, but instead kind of a never-ending book tour. How did that come about?**

I've done four book tours now. I love touring; it's a great excuse to travel, meet people, perform, and have adventures. Even when it's bad, it's good. I've been inspired by the amount of touring going on. People are taking their comics, stories, magazines, and acts of all description on the road and finding audiences of excited people. It's eroding the idea that readings are boring, stuffy, predictable things, and showcases the variety and vibrancy of indie, DIY culture. ¶ But a big part of

the trouble with touring is the infrastructure. It's something I'd like to help people put together themselves. So, I'm putting together an indie-press touring circuit called the "Perpetual Motion Roadshow". Basically, it's using the touring circuit that I've been traveling myself, starting in Toronto, and looping through Montreal, Boston, New York, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Chicago. It's based on this mythical invention, a perpetual motion machine—everyone from Leonardo da Vinci on up have had ideas about it. If you could create a machine that could be constantly in motion, it would be a free and clean source of energy. It's like how independent projects create these inspiring cycles that run on their own without corporate cash. So, each month, beginning in April, May, and June, I'm sending three people out in a car on this seven-city circuit. And each time they go through they'll hand out flyers for the next month. I'm just setting up the infrastructure and not responsible for the other stuff—that's up to them. I'm only doing it for three months at first and will assess it at that point. If it goes well, it'll be a permanent thing with an added circuit up and down the west coast. ¶ I've been pretty blown away by the amount of enthusiasm so far.

I've been talking to one-man bands, artists, performers, and trying to mix it up beyond just writers. And the writers doing it are not your average bookish readers; they're able to put their stuff into some kind of dynamic performance. My mantra has been: no corporate presses, no all-boy crews, no headliners, no boring readings!

**How do you feel about the so-called "digital media revolution", as it relates to publishing?**

I feel torn about the whole high-tech thing. So much has already been said about the potential it has to revolutionize things, but I think it can also become very disempowering because people feel like they can't do anything unless they have the latest tools. There's this big push towards upgrading all the time, which in most cases is totally unnecessary. ¶ But then you get something like the photocopier, which is a very accessible technology. It became so prevalent, and it *did* bring about a whole wave of self-publishing; it was a catalyst for the popularization

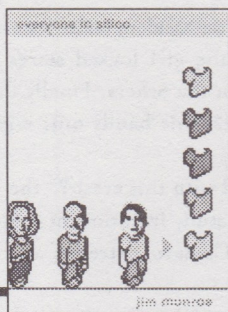
of the independent zine.

**Much of the content on your website gives practical advice to those interested in self-publishing. Why such a focus?**

Out of all the things I've done, putting together the DIY Books section on the site has been the most amazing. People assume that I'm altruistic or just a nice guy, but on some levels, it's ideological. I feel like I'm encouraging this political act. It's also the fact that I feel that this, in a way, will lead to more stuff that I like coming out. I like it when someone who isn't necessarily destined from birth to be a writer becomes a writer anyway. They often bring something new to it. People who haven't gone through the proper channels, by and large, are more interesting to me. So, in a sense, it's like supporting my own people.

**You've said, "If you can make a zine, you can make a book." Is it really that easy?**

Oh, it's not easy, but it's also not rocket science. If people have gone through the process of making a zine, they've learned a lot of the print technology; they already know the steps and they know how to complete a project. A book is a big project, so it helps to have done smaller projects of a similar kind. But in a lot of ways, it's a natural step for a person who writes or who does zines. And if you have the determination, ability, and drive, that's more important than your technical know-how in the beginning. ¶ I think that the good thing about the zine is that it teaches you that small projects are legitimate. Like, you can just do a little thing and it's OK. People are so keen on being legitimate—they feel that because they haven't written a book they're not a "real" writer. But I know of writers who are way better than me, but will never get any recognition because they don't get out in the world. But zinesters know how to get out in the world. The experience of doing and distributing a zine draws you out, so the idea of doing a reading or a performance of some sort isn't so insane. ¶ One of the things that zines taught me is that once you learn the whole do-it-yourself method, you can apply it very easily to other things. I think a lot of the most interesting art and music happening now is coming from people who previously did zines. It's not like they've abandoned zines for this new thing, they're just applying that kind of zine-spirit to another medium. And that's how I feel about books. ☺



# GO FOR SELF!

By Jim Munroe  
From Everyone in Silica



**D**OUG FLICKED THROUGH THE NUMBERS AGAIN, his long fingers jerking spastically. *Nope. There was no way to do it.* He sighed and leaned his head against the palm of his hand, placing it there like a crystal ball on a silk pillow.

And although it wasn't giving him any answers, Doug's head was somewhat crystal-ball-like: the bald top of his head gleamed softly, ringed by a well-kept monk's fringe. His long face suited his current depressed state: thin-lipped misery accompanied by a thin moustache.

Doug stood up, stretched, and gazed out his window. Through a tiny square patch—about one foot by one foot—he could see the mountains. Just the tips, but that was enough. He had no idea how the patch had peeled off, nor why it remained unfixed. He had considered telling someone, but it wasn't like his bosses made money off of the billboards that covered the outside of the buildings. That was the building owner's lookout.

It was a bit creepy, however, that prime ad space would be left to waste. It was the clearest indication Doug had had that things were really changing, of the emigration, or whatever the pundits were calling it these days. He really should have known that, of course, but Doug had felt his concern for such matters diminish steadily over the years, a leak he felt incapable of fixing.

He looked at his watch. Quarter to 12. *Shit.* He sat back down in his chair. Tapped the armrests, looked at his patch of sky. Stared at the finance sheet floating before him in his cubespace. *Oh, fuck it. It's close enough.*

He got up, waving off the spreadsheet, and elbowed his way into his black greatcoat. He headed out the door, checking his watch to see if he had enough for Pilar's. *Damn. Not enough for a decent meal and a tip.*

Striding past people in the hallway, he hid his disappointment. *Fuck how I hate the day before payday—* "Hi Gloria."

"Early lunches for the execs."

*Nosy—* "Well. We don't get to chit-chat on the phone all day, so

we need a proper break."

"Ha ha."

*What am I doing, sparring with the secretary?*

"Doug! How goes it ol' chum."

"Maintaining, Mike, you know how I do . . ." *No! Don't get on the elevator . . . ah shit. . . . So where you off to?*

"Pilar's. Can't get enough of that kelp piñata stuff. You?"

*It's paella, moron.* "Oh, McDonald's."

"McDonald's?"

*Don't act like you've never heard of it, you fat bastard—* "Sure. I force myself once a week at least. Keeps my ear to the ground."

"Hmm."

"It's all the same food, I mean—Pilar's is a McEatery." *God, that was desperate.*

"True, true. Well, watch those McNuggets, ha ha."

"Ha! Never touch 'em." *Can these doors open any slower?* "Well, take care."

As the elevator whisked Mike away to the underground mall, Doug fished around in his pocket for a handkerchief. He pushed through the (barely) revolving doors into a fairly nice day, but Doug had his polka-dotted hanky firmly pressed to his mouth as he headed towards the golden arches.

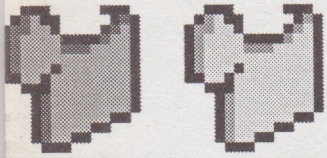
He caught a flash of his mountains between two massive buildings and almost knocked into an old man carrying a rather wet-looking garbage bag. "Fug you," he said through swollen lips, and Doug nodded his agreement, getting away from the cloud of stench as quickly as possible.

The McDonald's sign loomed above, inaccurately stating 99 Billion Served. It had been frozen there for as long as Doug had been alive, and he had actually written an essay on it for a class in corporate history. "Obviously, there was the practical consideration of the costs involved in adding new slots for higher numbers," he had written with the self-assurance native to cocky teens. "And there was also the zeitgeist of the '90s and '00s to consider—

Doug made an angry sound.

The Self ad emorphed. "Trouble with aggressive impulses? We all have them, but wouldn't it be nice if you could control your emotions and just mellow out? With the Self silver package—"

A shuddering sigh from Doug emorphed the ad again. "Feeling blue? Are your sad days lowering your productivity? If—"



a last-gasp reaction against the unlimited growth model. So McDonald's upper echelons sat tight, knowing that their point had already been made—that everybody loves their delicious flame-broiled burgers."

Standing in line, the greasy smell reminded him that they weren't flame-broiled at all. He had lost marks for that, although he had gotten top marks for analysis—that's what mattered, since he was sure (even then) that his future lay in coolhunting.

Doug thumbed a burger and fries, having to press the worn fries icon twice before it registered. He pressed his watch against the payplate and held it there. It dinged its approval, and the relief Doug felt at this was quickly followed by self-loathing. *Worried about the cost of lunch at Mickey Dee's...*

The tray slid toward him. He picked it up and headed to an empty table surrounded by other empty tables, as far away from the cluster of youngsters as he could get. A younger Doug Patterson would have tried to get a little closer and eavesdrop on the conversation and make mental notes of the slang, but Doug Patterson at 37 unwrapped his burger and watched them with dull indifference fortified with caution.

"But the two lanes were merging, right. So-so-so, I was like," the kid took a toke, "Let's go, shitarse. You wanted to race, so let's race." He had huge gaps between his teeth and the full attention of his crew. "Onetwenty-oneforty-onesixty... the motherfucker didn't stop, I'll give him that. Should have though. Ended up as the window display at Macy's. *Totalled*." He toked and blew a smoke stream at his gun finger, listened to his crew make impressed noises. "My Camaro had not a scratch."

One of the kids, a girl of about nine, screamed. Then, stopping entirely, pulling her knees up to her chest: "Oh see, so-so-so, that's my bullshite alar-um."

"Verify. Fuck you little-go! Just go verify. Last night. Granville and 7th." The kid crossed his arms, made cartoonishly big by his white puffy jacket, and jerked his chin. "Fuckin'—go! Look stupid."

The little girl exaggeratedly spoke into her watch. "List fatalities—" "Did I say he died?! No, I *didn't*..."

"Cancel. Did a car accident occur yesterday at Granville and 7th?"

The kid and the girl locked stares as they waited, eliciting hushed giggles from the others. Finally the watch verified an accident. The kid spread his hands out, a gap-toothed smile on his face. "An that's—"

"Cars involved with this crash?" the little girl continued, her face a curl-framed study in innocent curiosity.

"Two cars, a Camaro Extremis and a Lightfoot, were towed from the site."

One kid covered his face in his hands, moaning, and the sounds of misery-induced hilarity beat down the gap-toothed braggart.

"Stung," pronounced the little girl, a small hint of a smile on her lips.

"Who cares, I picked up that Camaro for like, a hundred fifty—" he started.

Singsong: "*Stung*."

"Ah, I'm makin' money all the time," the gap-toothed kid said, shoving himself upright, moving towards the counter.

"How much of the tow charges have been paid off?" the little girl asked her watch as he moved away.

"Zero dollars." Hilarity. "Accruing 13 percent interest per annum."

One of the kids stood up and called, "Yo, Zero! Get me a burger motherfucker!" Then he seemed to notice Doug. "So-so-so, chicken hawk. You like this?" He motioned to the six-pack of abs on his prepubescent body, visible through a sheer t-shirt.

Doug shook his head and looked away, finishing off his burger and starting on his fries. He emptied the packet on the tray and doused them liberally with ketchup, focusing on the motions, willing their attention away from him as an escaping convict wills away a searchlight on the yard.

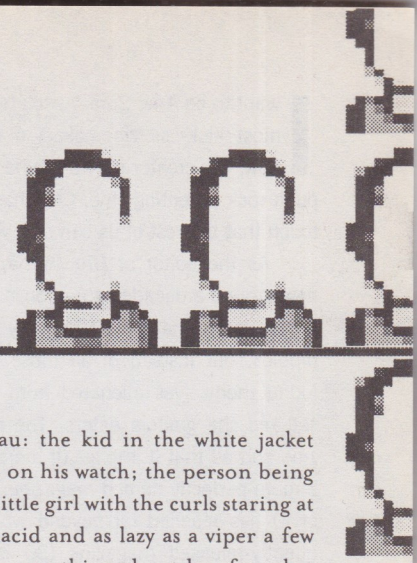
Doug lifted large handfuls of fries to his mouth in an effort to inconspicuously eat more quickly. He could only swallow the potato derivative so fast, however, and he looked up to see the gap-toothed kid veering towards him on his way back from the counter.

"So-so-so," the kid said, getting out a pack of tokes and sliding in beside him. He sparked up and gave Doug the once-over,

"Shut up," Doug said, as levelly as he could muster.

The ad paused for a second, and Doug almost thought it had listened. But, no.

"Sick of ads bombarding you every second of every day? Getting the Self gold package means that ads are optional!"



pausing at his expansive bald pate. Doug realized that what he'd thought were gaps were teeth tattooed black. "How you doin', guy?"

"I'm fine." Doug raised his eyes to the kid's, but the kid was already glancing over at his friends, who were talking amongst themselves. Only the little girl was really paying attention. Doug steadily mowed down his pile of fries.

"You know, guy," the kid said. "These Marlboros are really smooth. It's a perfectly balanced mix between tobacco and marijuana that packs a punch while staying really flavourful."

"Really," said Doug, happy that the kid was just pitching at him rather than something else. "Marlboros, you say," he said in an interested voice, mopping up the last of the ketchup with the last of his fries.

"Yes! Why not try one?"

Doug took one of the tokes from the green and white pack and set it on his tray, "Thanks."

"Yes, Marlboros. Marlboros are . . ." the kid was checking his watch.

Hopeless, Doug thought, out of pitch 10 seconds into it and checking his account in front of the mark. "Tasty?" he prompted. "With a high that lasts all day long?"

"So-so-so, with-a-high-that-lasts-all-day-long," the kid said, more to his watch than to Doug. A second later, "Fuck. Why didn't I get anything for that?"

Doug got up. "I said it first. You should have also offered me a light."

The kid went for his pocket.

"I don't smoke. But you get a few extra bucks for offering a light," he dumped his tray into the garbage, the mat sticking for a second before obeying gravity.

"Whattaya throwing the toke away for," the kid said bitterly.

"They're not cool any more," Doug said, walking away, taking his handkerchief out of his pocket and rubbing the grease off his fingers.

"Whatta fuck you know about cool," the kid muttered. "Bald-ass."

Doug pushed through the door, heard the kid yell "Money, alla time making money!" as he rejoined the group. Through the

window, his glance caught a tableau: the kid in the white jacket showing someone the bank balance on his watch; the person being shown looking contemptuous; the little girl with the curls staring at the gap-toothed kid, her face as placid and as lazy as a viper a few seconds before striking. There was something about her face that reminded him of his own daughter, and Doug walked away quickly, trying to distance himself from that thought.

After lifting the hanky to his nose, he decided to pocket it. Better unfiltered air than air filtered through french-fry grease. As he walked around the bums littering the sidewalks, he remembered an article he had read yesterday about Frisco—supposedly a few bums had been introduced in select locations "to ease the psychological transition." Doug thought the whole article was probably cooked up by Self for marketing reasons, but still . . . he might have admired it, except that he was unable to think about Frisco without a ball of anxiety spinning to life in his gut.

So naturally there was an ad in the elevator that made him think about it. The Self logo pulsated to life. "If you had upgraded already, you wouldn't have to be wasting time in this stupid box. Hours of your life are spent shuttling your meat from location to location, representing thousands of lost—"

Doug made an angry sound.

The Self ad emorphed. "Trouble with aggressive impulses? We all have them, but wouldn't it be nice if you could control your emotions and just mellow out? With the Self silver package—"

A shuddering sigh from Doug emorphed the ad again. "Feeling blue? Are your sad days lowering your productivity? If—"

"Shut up," Doug said, as levelly as he could muster.

The ad paused for a second, and Doug almost thought it had listened. But, no.

"Sick of ads bombarding you every second of every day? Getting the Self gold package means that ads are optional!"

The doors slid open, and the ad called cheerily after him "Go for Self!" The guitar lick reverbed until the doors mercifully closed. ©

*Everyone In Silico (Four Walls Eight Windows/No Media Kings, 2002) is available at bookstores and at [www.nomediakings.org](http://www.nomediakings.org)*

I want to be Ariel Gore. Absolutely one of the most kick-ass zinemakers operating right now, the creator of *Hip Mama*, the original punk rock parenting zine, Gore has that magic touch that the rest of us can only wish we had.

As the editor of *Hip Mama*, Gore broke new ground a decade ago, publishing a parenting magazine that wasn't for the yuppies or the hippies, but instead of all those parents that found themselves alienated from the minivan set and the granola eaters. The name of the zine and all that it implies (if there's ever been a more perfectly named magazine, I can't think of it) has reached far beyond what the infrequently-released magazine (30 issues in 10 years) ever could, becoming something of a phenomenon of its own. "I've read personals where people will call themselves a 'hip mama' looking to meet someone. It's a funny place to find a reference to the zine, but they're not really talking about the zine," Gore explains.

Gore could have gone glossy with *Hip Mama* years ago; she could have sold the whole thing to some big publisher that would have fucked it all up. She hasn't. Instead, she's struggled to make the print bills and agonized over not reaching the people that need the zine. The latter point is one of the reasons she's published so many books.

In addition to the zine, Gore has also written two parenting books, *The Hip Mama Survival Guide: Advice from the Trenches on Pregnancy, Childbirth, Cool Names, Clueless Doctors, Potty Training and Toddler Avengers* and *The Mother Trip: Hip Mama's Guide to Staying Sane in the Chaos of Motherhood* and co-edited *Breeder: Real-Life Stories from the New Generation of Mother*.

But with her newest book, *Atlas of the Human Heart*, Gore leaves the parenting wisdom behind, choosing instead to write a memoir of her teenage years. The book is moving, Gore's prose lyrical as she navigates through her complicated teen years. Gore documents her time as a miserable high school student in Palo Alto, California, then as a dropout traveling the world on a shoestring budget, and finally as a new mother.

Now with a 13 year-old who does zines of her own, Gore continues to document her and her daughter Mia's life in *Hip Mama* while forging ahead building their future.

Interview by Daniel Sinker

**You've put out this amazing magazine for 10 years. You've written three books. You've got a kid who's 13. And you did it all starting from nothing. What's the secret?**

What is the secret recipe? Well, I've never really had a day job, so there's that. There's the fact that I'm always working on it—if I'm not working on the magazine, I'm working on my books or something else related. I also send out a lot of press releases. A lot of people, other zinesters and artists that I know, find it kind of distasteful that I'll send press releases to *Glamour* all of the time, but eventually they'll do a little story and I'll get a whole bunch of subscriptions or sell a whole bunch of *Hip Mama* T-shirts. I don't spend any money on marketing—I don't have any!

**In doing research leading up to this interview, I felt like there was a tendency with mainstream press to totally soundbite you into: "Ariel Gore! Radical welfare mother!" Does that get really frustrating?**

Well, no. When I first started the zine and was doing a lot of welfare advocacy, I'd see something in the paper: and think, "Oh, that's not what I said!" It would mess with my head a little bit. But now I know that the reason I'm talking to some big newspaper that I would never work for is that I'm trying to get the word out about *Hip Mama* and then people can check it out for themselves. I don't feel that people judge you by what they read in some mainstream newspaper. ¶ Being on TV is really the only time where I've felt screwed. Like a year ago I was on CNN for a second right after September 11th because I was the only person that they could find to say that everything was getting super fascist. The e-mail death threats didn't end for days.

**What was the logic leap they made to even get in touch with you?**

I don't know. Some producer guy was calling around looking for the "Voice of Gen-X." I guess they put that into Google and called a couple of people that were wise enough to say no. Then they called me. [laughs]

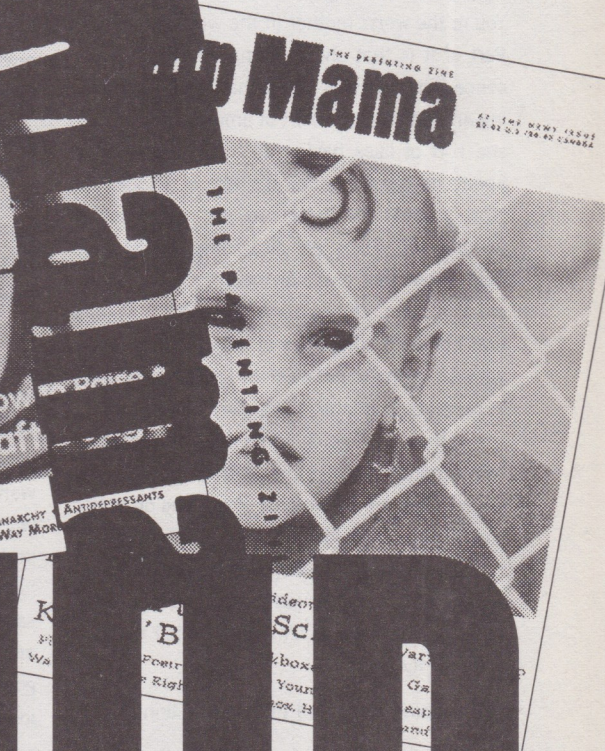
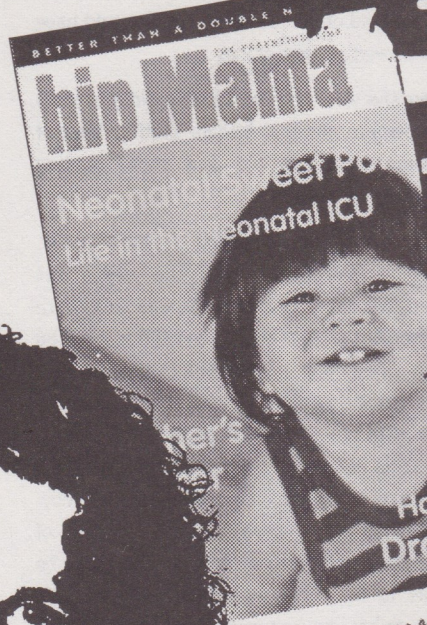
**How have you seen *Hip Mama* change over the last 10 years? What was your original intention with it versus what it is now?**

In the beginning I definitely thought it would be more for people like me; that the readership would be my age, single, maybe poor, college mom, and probably on welfare. Single moms—Mia was three when I did the first issue—were the main focus. Pretty immediately it turned out that I sorta had the demographic wrong. It didn't have to do with their family structure or their income level, or even that they were urban. It just turned out to be anyone that defined themselves as outside the mainstream yuppie parenting model. Since it's reader-written, the zine immediately changed to be more by the people that it appealed to. ¶ Over the years, Mia has gotten older the zine has grown too. I don't run a lot of birthing stories anymore and don't run a lot of weaning stories anymore because I've read so many of them that they seem boring to me. This next issue I'm working on is people taking their kids off to college and different sorts of growing-up stuff that I'm interested in now that I have a teenager. So it changes with my age and brain and changes with whoever the readership is at a given time.

**A lot of times a similar question is posed to me, and my response is very similar in that *Punk Planet* started when I was 19 and what was interesting to me at 19 isn't as interesting to me now. If I'm going to continue to work on this, it has to be interesting to me. As a result, you can kind of plot my growth through *Punk Planet's* changes. But you can chart the growth of the magazine through the growth of your daughter. That's really fascinating.**

It's a trip. I really had no idea I'd be doing it this long when I started it. That's the thing with a zine—people start subscribing, and that's another year you've committed to!

**IN THE BEGINNING I DEFINITELY THOUGHT IT WOULD BE MORE FOR PEOPLE LIKE ME; THAT THE READERSHIP WOULD BE MY AGE, SINGLE, MAYBE POOR, COLLEGE MOM, AND PROBABLY ON WELFARE. SINGLE MOMS—MIA WAS THREE WHEN I DID THE FIRST ISSUE—WERE THE MAIN FOCUS.**



hip

hip

hip Mama

MAMA

**PRETTY IMMEDIATELY IT TURNED OUT THAT I SORTA HAD THE DEMOGRAPHIC WRONG. IT DIDN'T HAVE TO DO WITH THEIR FAMILY STRUCTURE OR THEIR INCOME LEVEL, OR EVEN THAT THEY WERE URBAN. IT JUST TURNED OUT TO BE ANYONE THAT DEFINED THEMSELVES AS OUTSIDE THE MAINSTREAM YUPPIE PARENTING MODEL.**

**How has it been juggling raising a kid and raising a magazine?**

Well, it's embarrassing to be neglecting your child while writing about effective parenting, but it's better than having a day job. [laughs] It's sorta fun to get Mia's feedback now. She couldn't read it and talk about it when she was three and now she can.

**What kind of feedback does she give?**

Why are you writing all of this stuff for mothers? You're the *worst* mother in the world!" [laughs] Part of it is that she's getting into the adolescence thing, so she thinks that I'm embarrassing and dorky and is sort of amused by me. But she sort of likes having all the little vignettes about her growing up, it's like a scrapbook. "Did I really do that? Are you exaggerating about that?" There are also some things she's read about that give her more compassion for me as a mom. Things that she didn't . . . Things that I protected her from at the time, like when we were going to get evicted. For her to be able to read about it later, she's like "Whoa, I didn't know that was going on!" It's like having a whole bunch of Christmas letters around, you know? They are documents of my version of her growing up. She's looking forward to writing her version of the story which is going to be entirely different, but I haven't seen the draft yet. She's always saying, "I'm going to tell the *real* story in my zine!"

**Is she doing zines and that sort of thing?**

She was doing a zine for a while called *Inside My Head: Love and Death in 5th Grade*. When we went on the book tour for *Breeders* she was selling it on the road and making a lot more money than any of us! She hasn't been doing any zines these days. She's actually the captain of her cheerleading team, which ironically was the running joke when she was little: "She's just going to grow up to be a cheerleader!"

**I have some friends that have a two year old, and they're all tattooed out and we always tease them about stuff like that.**

It's not so funny anymore! [laughs] I've been telling people about it and I get all of this, "Oh,

I'm sorry that happened to you! I'm sure it's a passing phase!" kind of condolence cards about it. But it's not hurting anybody, you know? It's *just* cheerleading! It doesn't really bother me, but I definitely tell people to shut up when they trying to make other running jokes now, like "She's going to become a Born Again!" It's sad though—the options she has for teenage rebellion are kind of limited. I feel like I should have disapproved of more things.

**When she was learning to read did you steer her towards non-mainstream stuff? I kind of envision having a kid and them reading *Cometbus* at seven.**

She's always had everything available to her, including mainstream stuff. The way I was raised, we didn't have a TV; it was super hippie, non-sexist, non-traditional child rearing. So when I had Mia, I was kind of backtracking from that. I do have a TV and I don't go out of my way to buy Disney videos, but they end up here. She definitely has mixed interests—she'll love some totally radical zine and love her Snow White stuff at the same time. She has sort of gone back and forth in how mainstream she wants to be and how culturally literate she wants to be. I haven't really done a fabulous job protecting her from the vacuum of commercialism. That was my mom's whole goal—I never saw the *Brady Bunch* until Mia was a little girl and they were showing re-runs. Maybe it was good for me, but I usually just felt like I had no idea what anyone was talking about.

**I can see that way of being raised as being alienating.**

Maybe it's a little better to be raised that way . . . But Mia has never wanted to be the brooding artist in the corner. She's never thought that people were really annoying in general. She's always wanted to know what was going on and be social, that's just part of her personality. I was *devastated* when she was three and wanted all of this Beauty and the Beast crap. I'm a little more at peace with that now, but we'll see—I might be kicking myself for letting her watch TV at some point. But she's *really* comfortable in the world, which is really nice for me to see in a 7th

grader because I sure wasn't. When she was starting middle school, I was like "You can drop out *any time* you want. Any time you feel this is too much for you, you can go another whole way." After a couple of months, she was like, "I don't see what everyone was trippin' on middle school so much. I *never* feel as powerful as I do when I walk down the hall of my middle school!" You're the only child to ever feel that way.

**With *Atlas of the Human Heart*, are you conscious of writing about your teenage years with Mia approaching hers? Is the book written for her in some ways?**

Well, when I started working on it, she had just turned 11, so her becoming a teenager wasn't really on my mind. When I moved to Portland, I started residency teaching in the public high school here. That was the more immediate inspiration—just being back on a high school campus and being among 16, 17, 18 year-olds. Reading their poetry and stories definitely got me flashbacking to half my life ago. ¶ Now that it's going to press, I'm not that excited about Mia reading it. It's not a good road map for her life, I don't think. Mia has been so much more sheltered than I ever was in a lot of ways—I think kids are now more than we were in the '70s and '80s. She's going on 13 and can pretty much be outside of adult supervision for 15 minutes at a time, which was nothing like my experience at that time. I could take the train to San Francisco by myself and I had to be back either by dark or leave a note. If I fell asleep at a friends' house and I woke up the next morning, my parents were bummed, but it wasn't the end of the world. If Mia didn't call and didn't come home, I would have the cops all over it! So I'm *definitely* more paranoid than my parents were. I don't know if the times are really all that different, I don't know that it's all that different to be a kid now, but I'm definitely more conscious of the dangers.

**What in your book are you most worried about? I'm assuming that you're not going to be like, "You can't read this."**

No, I've talked to her about it a lot and she's heard excerpts that I've read at different events.

I've definitely talked to her about the fact that my view of her dad is highlighted in the book, which might not be *her* view of her dad—it certainly isn't his view of himself. Mercifully, she's old enough to know that everyone has their own truth. We were talking about it the other night and she was like, "Well, is it true?" And I said, "Yes, it's *my* truth. If you have a slumber party and somebody throws a fit and all these people get in a fight and everyone has to go home you're all going to have a totally different story, right?" She gets that in a basic way. I think it's sort of funny as a teenager to think of your own parents as teenagers. I feel a little nervous about it. She knows me pretty well, but she knows me as a mom which is a different part of myself.

**Did you ever in your wildest dreams, when she was three and you were just starting *Hip Mama* imagine this kind of moment?**

No. I'm not very good at foreseeing things, or even really planning anything. This book started out as a zine, then it got a little too long for that, so it was going to be a series of zines, and then got a little unwieldy for *that*. It was really only a year ago that I sort of sat down and was like: "OK, this is a book and I need to give it to a publisher because I can't pay the printer." So I guess I plan about a year in advance.

**So then what's happening next year?**

Mia and I are actually working on a book about adolescence, which is a little more in the vein of *The Mother Trip*. It's a bunch of essays, some of them by Mia, some of them by me, and that's going to be it for me in terms of parenting books. Even if I have another kid, that's going to be it for me. But Mia wanted to be a part of something, so we got to working on this project. She kind of goes back and forth on it, changes her mind as to whether she wants to do it at all, but she's excited that she's finally going on a book tour with me where she gets to read, too.

**Is it hard haggling over royalty rates with her?**

No, she's happy with her pay—she takes it directly to the mall. ©

**hip**


**hip Mama**

**Our-time  
Mama  
Revolution**



FEATURING: SLEETER KINNEY • DISABILITY  
• OUR LADY OF GUERDALUPE • MATHOK THE COWBOYDOLLS  
• PERN CAPELLA • FAITH TO BUSH: NO Iraq WAR  
• ACTIVISM IDEAS • AND WAY MORE...





# CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

BY ARIEL GORE  
FROM *ATLAS OF THE HUMAN HEART*

Journal entry #181

52°23'N 4°55'E

Summer, 1988

with the lights of a new city

i flash between panic and faith

A SMUGGLING RUN GONE SLIGHTLY WRONG landed me in Amsterdam with neither compass nor map. No money. No ticket to anywhere. My silver jewelry from Lhasa and Kathmandu spread out in front of me. Selling my travels in the square for some food and some hash.

My assignment had been simple enough: Take Mr. Wong's bags from Hong Kong to New Delhi, drop them off with a man named Singh, pick up a bag of gems, fly to Amsterdam, drop those off with a man named Steve, fly home to Hong Kong. Pass go. Collect \$1,000. Simple.

I made the run from Hong Kong to New Delhi without incident.

Singh was fat, bought me brandy and Lucky Strike cigarettes in the airport bar, warned me that Europe could be dangerous.

"New Delhi can be dangerous, too," I offered, and he nodded his fat head.

My mind spun tipsy as I left Singh, but that's no excuse. I was stoned, too, having smuggled a joint in my bra and smoked it in the air-conditioned bathroom. I checked the bag at the Aeroflot counter. A 747 routed through Moscow. Five-hour layover in a cold, stark airport. *What's the point of being a superpower if there's nothing to eat but cabbage stew?* Then on to Amsterdam. From my window seat, the world spun below. An argument with the blond steward about cutlery: I'd pocketed the airline's stainless steel fork, spoon and butter knife. He said I couldn't deplane. He knew I'd stolen them. He stood in the middle of the aisle, hand extended. "Do you want me to call the police?" I gave in. Of course I gave in. I handed him the fork, the spoon and then, reluctantly, the butter knife. I was the last passenger off the plane.

Midnight at Schiphol airport. Watching as the suitcases and backpacks and boxes circled the belt. I just stood there. Watching. Waiting. Watching. Waiting until there were no bags at all. Sinking disbelief at my own stupidity. *I checked the bag of diamonds and emeralds and rubies through Cold War Moscow. I checked the bag of diamonds and emeralds and rubies. I. Checked. The. Bag.*

I sat down on the thinly carpeted floor next to the now-empty conveyor belt, buried my face in my hands. My cheeks felt hot against my palms. *Master gold smuggler. How could I be so stupid?*

Hong Kong to Seoul we were supposed to check the bags. Hard suitcases with gold in the lining. Hong Kong to New Delhi we were supposed to check the bags. Hard suitcases with god-knows-what in the lining. But Singh had handed me a neon green duffel bag. Carry-on size. I'd stuffed my own things into it, checked everything but the clothes on my back, the jewelry on my body, the passport and wallet and trinkets and journal and Wilhelm translation of the *I Ching* in my red silk purse from Kathmandu. Singh hadn't mentioned that I was supposed to keep the duffel with me. *Probably because only a complete idiot would check a bag full of diamonds and emeralds and rubies through Cold War Moscow.*

I sat there until the conveyor belt stopped moving.

A thin, freckled woman wearing a creased blue airline uniform appeared next to me. "You are waiting for a bag?"

I stood up, wiped my eyes.

She had Cyndi Lauper hair and the face of somebody's mother, mascara smudged on one side. "Don't worry, honey," she whispered, placing a hand on my shoulder. "Surely your luggage is only temporarily lost. Perhaps someone else has picked it up? Many bags look alike. They will return it. Or perhaps it will come through on the next flight?"

But even if it turned up, I knew I wouldn't be able to claim it. I wanted to call Mr. Wong. Or Singh. Surely there was some way to get the gems back. I couldn't believe I hadn't asked either of them a single "what-if." I couldn't believe they'd sent me off without any advice. *How much were the gems worth? Would I have to pay for them now?* Maybe there were drugs in the bag, too. Maybe the woman with Cyndi Lauper hair was waiting for me to describe my bag to her, to claim it. I wondered if I'd go to jail in Amsterdam or be sent back to Moscow, to New Delhi, to Hong Kong. I would refuse to leave Amsterdam. I could handle a Dutch jail. My connection would be waiting for me outside customs. Steve. *Could I meet him? Tell him what*

happened? He'd say I had to go back, claim the bag. He'd say I owed him thousands of dollars. He'd have sharpened gold teeth, and a three-day beard. I'd try to explain myself—he wouldn't care. He'd kill me, dump my body in a canal, take my passport. I wanted to call Djuna. How well did she know Mr. Wong? I stood up.

"Honey?" the airline woman whispered.

"I'm sorry," was all I said. "I guess I forgot to check a bag. I didn't bring anything."

She cocked her head to one side.

"I'm sorry." I turned toward a glowing customs sign.

I counted my breaths as I walked past the uniformed officials, nothing to declare. I still had two hundred dollars US in my wallet, traded it all for guilders at Thomas Cooke. I kept my head bowed as I stepped through the glass doors into the cool night. Either my middleman would approach me or he wouldn't. Either he'd be looking for a neon green duffel bag or he'd be looking for me. I took small comfort in the fact that I didn't stand out in Amsterdam. Dark hair, pale skin. I could be French. Or Russian. Even Dutch.

No one approached me.

I hailed a taxi into town, took a bed in the first hostel I saw. Single bunks with pink, fitted sheets. I must have fallen asleep, because next thing I was running through the long, fluorescent-lit hallways of the Moscow airport. I held the duffel bag tight at my side. I could hear footfalls close behind me. I thought I was running from Steve, from Singh, from Mr. Wong. But when I tripped on a thick, coiled rope and turned to face my pursuer, a bejeweled Teacher Fu from the Beijing Language Institute stood over me. I clutched the green bag. "We're not going to the Lido," was all I said. I had to find the underground tunnel out of Moscow.

I woke up early, my inner clock still set to the Asian sun.

In the dull August light seeping through venetian blinds, the other kids in the room looked like orphans. Tattered sleep shirts. Dirty military backpacks at their feet. Neglected punk hairdos—natural roots under messy blue or blond or red or black dye jobs. They clutched their money belts even as they slept. I focused on a girl in the bottom bunk across from me. Thick black hair. Bleach job at least six months old. Her wide face acne-scarred. She looked Korean. Or northern Chinese. But by her silver and turquoise earrings, I guessed she was American. I watched her as she slept. Her blanketed chest rose and fell. She felt my stare, maybe, opened her eyes, turned sleepily toward me, squinted, then focused: "Were you there when I went to sleep?"

"No. Got in late."

"I'm not hallucinating you, am I?" Her lips hardly moved when she spoke.

"Not unless I'm dreaming you, too."

She closed her eyes, took a slow breath, opened them again. "You ever actually wake up stoned?"

"I don't think so."

"It sucks, man. This is the only city in the world where I actually wake up stoned. I keep thinking I'm going crazy. But then I remember I'm just stoned." She lit a roach from the ashtray under her bed, took a hit, then held it out for me.

I finished it off.

"Careful," she mumbled as she dozed off. "That shit's a train wreck." She had an orange copy of *On the Road* next to her pillow.

I climbed out of bed, still dressed in my Chinese army pants and gray sweatshirt. I'd slept with my red silk purse on my chest. I laced up my boots, slung the purse over my shoulder, headed out into the morning to find a cup of coffee.

I'd forgotten how pretty a city Amsterdam was. Overcast skies forever threatening to weep. Endless circles of canals. Three- and four- and five-story buildings huddled together as if to stay warm. Brick streets and cobblestone alleyways. One-speed bicycles and yellow tramcars. Artists and buskers setting up on every corner. I passed a Chinese herb shop, a Parisian shoe store, an Italian restaurant, ducked into a café with a tangerine ceiling. The only waiter, a pale goateed kid with a silver ring through his nose, spoke English, said, "Business is slow. You would like to fuck?"

"No, thanks."

"I have a room in back." He gestured with his head, raised a thin eyebrow.

"No, really."

I sipped cappuccino and nibbled a hash cookie at my corner table. I had stuff to figure out, like: *How was I going to get back to Hong Kong? And: Where could I get a cheap bottle of conditioner?* I needed a new backpack, too. Maybe a change of clothes. I lit a cigarette.

Another girl stumbled into the café. Her black sweater fell over one shoulder revealing a pale purple bra strap. She sat down near the front window, dropped her oversized plastic handbag onto the hardwood floor. The goateed kid approached her, said something. She picked up her bag and followed him into the back. He shot me an arrogant glance as they passed.

I left without paying.

*You just go around in your own little world and you don't know where you are.*

Outside, I headed down the main road toward Central Station. As I neared it, a youngish man approached me. Maybe 25, he reminded me of Guy. Smooth skin. Sweet smile. "You lost?"

"Not really. Just trying to figure out where I can find a drugstore."

"Oh, yeah," he nodded. "There's one around the corner. You got a cigarette? I can take you."

I gave him a Lucky Strike, followed him through an alleyway. He scratched his nose, asked where I'd come from.

"I fucking lost my luggage on the way in," I was saying when I felt someone's warm breath at the back of my neck.

**I FELT ALONE AND ALIVE IN THE BEST KIND OF WAY. ALL THE KNIFE-WIELDING THIEVES AND GOLD-SMUGGLING RECRUITERS AND LANGUAGE INSTITUTE SPIES AND DATE-RAPISTS IN THE WHOLE WORLD COULD REALLY JUST GO FUCK THEMSELVES. THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHERE I WAS NOW.**

As I turned, she whispered, "That's too bad, because now I'm going to take your money." She had a knife pressed against my throat. Dark skin, pretty face. No one I'd ever think to be afraid of.

I glanced back at the man, somehow thinking he'd help me. But he had my red purse open.

Disoriented, I said, "OK, but can I keep my passport?"

"Take the passport," the woman hissed, pressing her cold blade against my skin.

He rifled through my wallet, grabbing at the guilders, held my dark blue passport in his palm.

I said, "Oh man, come on."

And he smiled his Guy-smile, winked at me. "Yeah—let's let the girl keep her passport."

"Hurry it up," the woman seethed, screwing up her pretty face.

Just then an old man on a black one-speed bicycle bumped around a curve in the alleyway.

"Shit—" They took off running. As they rounded the corner, the man dropped my passport onto the cobblestones.

I picked up the worn booklet, leafed through the pages of visas and travel permits, looked at the old picture of myself—fourteen years old in my red *Flashdance* sweatshirt.

Well, fuck, I thought.

I didn't get any conditioner. I didn't go back to the hostel. I didn't call Djuna. I didn't call Mr. Wong. I stayed in Amsterdam, spread out my silver jewelry and Hindu trinkets in Leidseplein. Selling my travels in the square. I felt alone and alive in the best kind of way. All the knife-wielding thieves and gold-smuggling recruiters and language institute spies and date-rapists in the whole world could really just go fuck themselves. They didn't know where I was now. I bought an ash-colored woolen cap, a used Rilke book and a copy of *Sassafras, Cypress and Indigo* by Ntozake Shange. I ate the free food the Hare Krishnas served near the waterfront behind Central Station, slept in a covered doorway on Van Ostadestraat until a dreadlocked white kid nudged me with his boot one morning. I looked up at him from the sidewalk, the blue sky brilliant behind his wild hair.

"I don't know why you sleep out here," he said. His accent was British, but I couldn't place it any more specifically than that. "We have free rent practically right downstairs."

#### WE ARE HERE TO RUIN OURSELVES

The squat on Van Ostadestraat was accessible via a ground-level window in an alley a quarter of a block down from my covered doorway. The dreadlocked kid introduced himself as Monk, opened the black-silled window for me. "You just squiggle on in there."

So in I went, feet first, landed solidly on a wooden chair propped there under the window to catch the entrants. Monk fol-

lowed me down into the brick-walled basement. Half a dozen sleeping kids lined up on mattresses across a red concrete floor. A table was piled with books and a boom box under the only other window.

"I was just on my way out," Monk whispered. "I have to go, but you can sleep over there." He pointed to an empty blue mattress, then climbed onto the chair and hoisted himself out again. He stuck his head back in through the window. "I didn't get your name."

"Ghost Girl."

He winked at me. "This is a shit hole. But I'm sure you'll be more comfortable than you were on the street."

Almost all of the squatters on Van Ostadestraat spoke English. They were white. They came from Sweden or Finland or Ohio or Germany or England or Wales. Most nights, a half-dozen kids slept on the red cement floor in the main room that was connected by a dark hallway to a bathroom and a windowless back room decorated with silk-screened communist propaganda posters.

Mornings, I watched the travelers from my bed. I could tell by the way each of them moved through the space whether they considered the place home, or just a transitory crash pad. Bobby McFerrin sang "Don't Worry, Be Happy" from the boom box on the table. And Bono wailed "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For."

We were allowed to invite anyone we liked to come and live rent-free in the basement squat, but we could get 86'd for bringing in an "asshole." The rules—and the determinations regarding who was an asshole—were said to be made by consensus, but the system functioned more like a stockholder's meeting favoring tenants with seniority and voice-volume. As far as I could tell, a drunk Londoner named Lance who slept in the back room with his skinny-boy sidekick from Liverpool had the seniority thing wrapped up. And Flower, a hippie chick with tremendous red-blond hair, had voice enough to move and propose and veto and vote for all those absent or silent. I never cast a ballot.

I sat on my mattress, mostly, read my books, wrote in my journal, smoked fat joints, hoisted myself out of the window in the afternoons to wander the narrow Amsterdam streets counting elms and ginkgos and London plane trees.

Rilke, in unassigned reading: *Often a star was waiting for you to notice it. A wave rolled towards you out of the distant past, or as you walked under an open window, a violin yielded itself to your hearing. All this was a mission. But could you accomplish it?*

I set the book down on my blue mattress, worried: *What if it all had been a mission? What if I'd accomplished nothing?* I tried to push the questions out of my mind, rolled another joint instead. As I lit it, I thought, *This wouldn't be such a bad way to spend my whole life, would it? Outgrowing shells, searching for new ones. Tide pool hermit crab. Ebbing and flowing*

**I WASN'T SOME LOST BROKE TRAVELER GIRL SLEEPING AMONG STRANGERS IN THE BASEMENT OF A CONDEMNED BUILDING, QUEEN OF UNACCOMPLISHED MISSIONS. NO! I WAS A TAOIST WARRIOR. I KNEW THE WISDOM OF NOT-DOING. MY LIFE WAS A RIVERBED. AND I WAS THE WATER—RUSHING TRUSTING, NOT KNOWING WHERE I WAS GOING, BECAUSE THE WATER ISN'T SUPPOSED TO KNOW WHERE IT'S GOING. THE WATER JUST FLOWS.**

with the tide. I held the smoke in my lungs for as long as I could, exhaled with a cough.

The cool thing about smoking pot was that it lent a certain profundity to total inaction. Come to think of it, it lent a certain profundity to *everything*. With a joint in hand, I wasn't a complete idiot who'd gone and lost a duffel bag full of diamonds and emeralds and rubies in Cold War Moscow, then managed to get mugged in broad daylight. No. *Destiny* had brought me to Amsterdam. *Providence* had found me a bed. This was what life was all about. Riding possibilities. I wasn't some lost broke traveler girl sleeping among strangers in the basement of a condemned building, queen of unaccomplished missions. No! I was a Taoist warrior. I knew the wisdom of not-doing. My life was a riverbed. And I was the water—rushing trusting, not knowing where I was going, because the water isn't *supposed* to know where it's going. The water just flows. Sometimes my stream would cross someone else's stream. We'd meet, mingle, and then we'd flow on—alone. Water. Riverbed. I was water and life was a riverbed. *I am water and life is a riverbed!* I wrote this down in my journal so as never to forget what a deep thought I'd once had.

I'd been coming up with damp and profound metaphors like this for a couple of weeks the morning Monk brought in the stoned girl with silver and turquoise earrings I recognized immediately from my first night in town. *Nikki*. She introduced herself in a whisper, took the empty mattress next to mine, stacked her collection of Kerouac books against the wall, went right to sleep.

She never woke up before noon.

By then blue-eyed American Joey was usually awake, too, crying at the table because his grandmother had broken his heart. Sometimes, when he drank whiskey or sweet, imported Southern Comfort, he talked about it, talked about her. "I miss her so much," he'd say.

And his shaven-headed German boyfriend would wrap his arms around him and rock him, just a little.

Joey whimpered, "She used to say she'd always love me, you know? And now it's like I can't even visit her anymore. She's beautiful, my grandma, you know? Smells like jasmine soap. I miss watching her put on her makeup in the morning."

His boyfriend rocked him and whispered, "You really ought to call her, Joe Joe."

But Joey shook his head. "She don't love me no more. Sixteen years I lived in her house. But she says we're sinners now."

"Do you wanna go get something to eat at the Krishna place?" I asked Nikki when she opened her eyes and sparked up her first joint of the day.

"All right," she said. "Smoke out first?"

I took a single hit off her tobacco-hash joint, and closed my eyes.

In Amsterdam, everything felt hazy, expansive. The air held water. The bricks held water. The concrete held water. It was a wonder the whole city didn't just dissolve into liquid nothingness. Just the opposite: The city felt solid. Water solid.

At the Krishna place, orange-clad monks dished up bowls of thick purple borscht. They offered chunks of whole grain bread—

dry, but heavy. I thought the texture alone could surely sustain me.

"This food is fucking good," Nikki said. She wore a black sweatshirt, black army pants, black boots.

I wondered what it might taste like if we weren't so high.

We walked under the tram wires in the waning gray afternoon. The smells of cigarette smoke and patchouli mixed uneasily with the dampness along the crowded brick streets. "You're from the States?"

"Yeah." Nikki looked down as we walked, her eyes only half-open. Her grin made me think she'd just told herself a good joke. "California."

"Bay Area?"

"Yeah."

"Me, too."

"San Jose."

"Palo Alto."

"So where'd you get a name like Ghost Girl?"

"China."

"Figures," she said. "All my grandparents were from there. But I've never been."

I lit a cigarette.

"Listen," Nikki said. "I actually have some guilders. Do you wanna see a movie?"

My face must have lit up, because she didn't wait for me to answer. She giggled, pulled me into the red-carpeted lobby of a theater I hadn't noticed we were passing. "*Moonstruck*?"

"In Dutch?"

"No, English."

I hadn't seen a movie since *Three Amigos!* in Kathmandu. How long ago? Ten months? And before that? *Vagabond*? I couldn't remember the last movie I'd seen in English.

The dark theater smelled salty, like home. Onscreen, Cher fell for Nicolas Cage. I felt like such a sap, drawn into the whole Beauty and the Beast plot line. "I love you," Nicolas Cage pleaded with Cher in a snowy moonlit alley. "Not like they told you love is, and I didn't know this either, but love don't make things nice—it ruins everything. It breaks your heart. It makes things a mess . . . We aren't here to make things perfect. The snowflakes are perfect. The stars are perfect. Not us. Not us! We are here to ruin ourselves and to break our hearts and love the wrong people and die . . ."

I glanced over at Nikki. Tears streamed down her pale cheeks. *Relief*. Two homeless suckers for Hollywood aren't nearly so lonely as one.

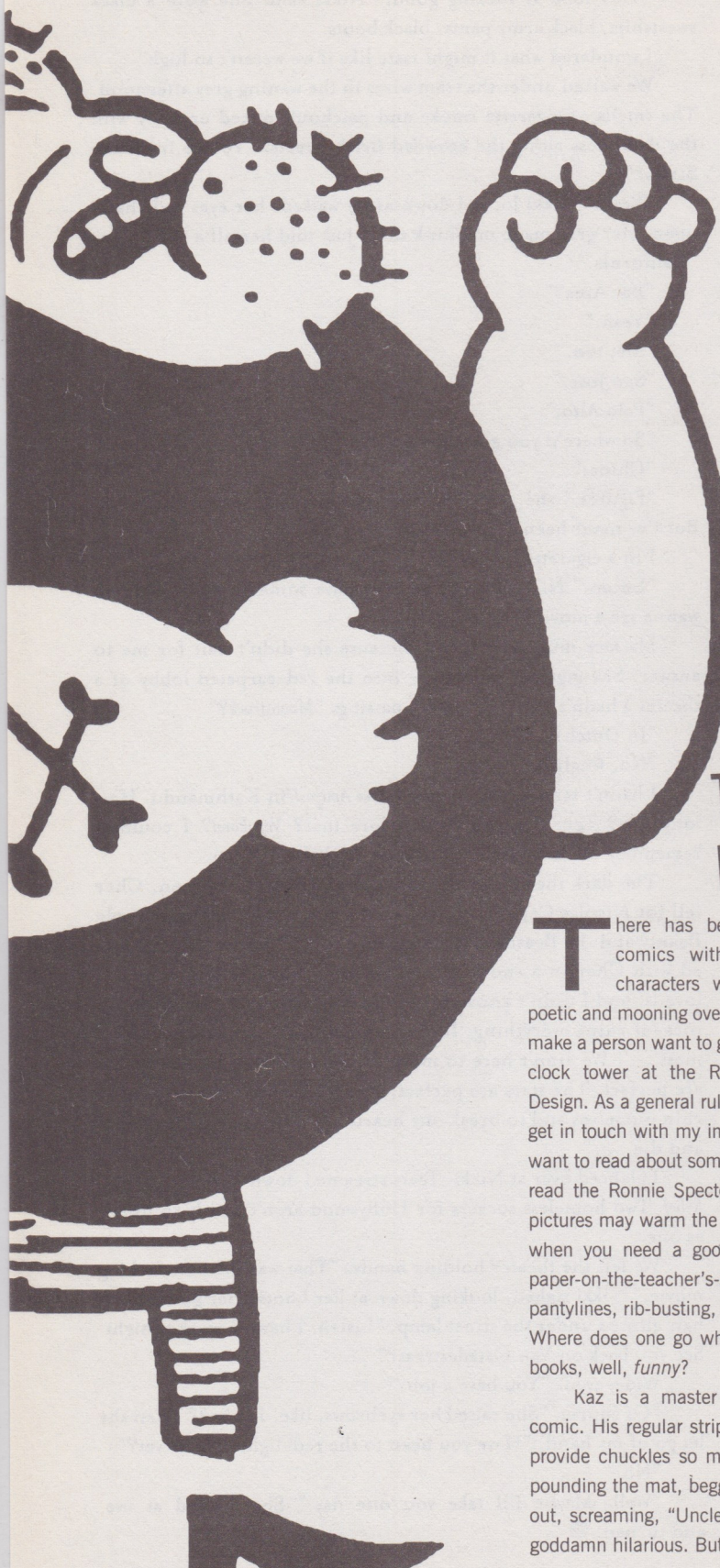
We left the theater holding hands. "That was the best fucking movie," Nikki sighed, looking down at her boots. Her glossy black hair glinted under the street lamp. "Listen, I have to work tonight. See you back on Van Ostadestraat?"

Wide-eyed: "You have a job?"

"Of course." She raised her eyebrows, like, *You don't*? Then she let go of my hand. "Have you been to the red-light district yet?"

"No."

"Well. Maybe I'll take you one day." She winked at me, and turned. ©



©Kaz

Take a rubber ball, stick some knives in it, and make it feel bad.

There has been a recent surge in comics with beautifully rendered characters with large eyes waxing poetic and mooning over lost love. It's enough to make a person want to grab a rifle and climb the clock tower at the Rhode Island School of Design. As a general rule, I don't read comics to get in touch with my inner emo baby. If I really want to read about something heartbreaking, I'll read the Ronnie Spector autobiography. Pretty pictures may warm the cockles, but what about when you need a good, old-fashioned, toilet-paper-on-the-teacher's-shoes, Rosie-O'Donnell's-pantylines, rib-busting, guffaw-inducing, comic? Where does one go when they like their funny books, well, *funny*?

Kaz is a master of the four panel gag comic. His regular strip, *Underworld*, does not provide chuckles so much as it will have you pounding the mat, begging the ref to count you out, screaming, "Uncle!" and "Mercy!" it is so goddamn hilarious. But Kaz is relentless. There

will be no time-out for you.

Kaz's drawings are the perfect blend of punk rock kinky and old school classic comic style a'la *Popeye* and Ernie Bushmiller's *Nancy*. Everything in *Underworld* is dripping, scarred, stubbled, and exposed. Hillbillies and junkies are the demigods of this wise and depraved kingdom. Babies score black market teat, bums perform trashcan puppet shows, and a black Nancy invades your dreams.

Kaz was thrust into the business of being funny when his Lithuanian immigrant parents named him, "Kazimieras Prapuolenis" and sent him to school in Hoboken, New Jersey, in the '60s and '70s. He later moved to New York where he honed his skills as a cartoonist and a punk rock art fag, showcasing his work in such publications as *RAW*, *Weirdo*, *Nickelodeon*, the *New Yorker*, the *Village Voice*, *Swank*, and many other magazines and newspapers across this great land.

Interview by Janelle

**Describe the basic components of an *Underworld* character.**

Take a rubber ball, stick some knives in it, and make it feel bad.

**What was the underground comic scene like when you first started? How has it changed since then?**

The original underground cartoonists had retreated to their caves just repeating themselves and not allowing anyone new to join the club. Hardly anyone was buying their crap anyway. Kids were too busy with—then new—video games, Star Wars, and designer drugs. The lone exception was Art Spiegelman who started *RAW* magazine and put everyone to shame. The little New York City crowd around me was hoping to become the cartoon jokers of their generation, but the only member who had any writing talent was Peter Bagge—and he had to move to Seattle to become famous. Nowadays with hard work, everyone has a chance to publish a book.

**Growing up, did you get made fun of for your funny name and Lithuanian ways?**

Yes, and it has made me what I am today. I had different names that I told kids: first I told some kids my name was Charlie, but they still made fun of me by calling me Charlie Brown; then I thought I'll call myself President Kennedy, 'cause I figured no one would make fun of me for having the same name as one of America's most beloved presidents. But the kids in my neighborhood just threatened to beat me up for taking that name. Then some other kid moved in called Igor and we just made fun of him.

**How about for looking like Francis Bacon?**

You're the only person that's ever said that. In Junior High I used to wear a mod medallion that said "HERE COMES THE JUDGE"; I had plaid bell-bottoms and a pit-stained Cat Stevens T-shirt. Later I was hoping to grow up to look like Frank Zappa, who I thought was the coolest looking adult male I've ever seen. Didn't happen. I tried looking like Iggy Pop in high school, but I really looked like a fag. People nowadays say I look like Michael Douglas, Charlie Sheen, and as I get older, Martin Sheen—all fags.

**What were some of your favorite comic strips growing up?**

Peanuts, Dick Tracy, Nancy, and Smokey Stover. I also read *Mad*, *Spider-Man*, *Captain America*, and any horror, crime, or war comic. *Heavy Metal*. *National Lampoon* strips: Chicken Guts, Dirty Duck, Cheech Wizard, Mark Stamaty—don't know if I got his name right, he couldn't draw, but he was funny as hell. Then I discovered underground comics—*Zap*, *Big Ass*, etc.—and I lost my mind.

**Did you pull any good pranks as a kid?**

Just some acts of cruelty, like tossing a bag over a kid and throwing him down a steep hill, or following some kid around town and throwing shit at him when he wasn't looking. I remember that it was important to us to turn other kids into our slaves. There was a deep desire to have slaves, it was the white European in us. When we had a slave—some unworthy asshole who wanted to be our friend—we'd make him get us beer, shoplift stuff, wade into a river, say rude things to women on the street, etc. We'd sit back and cackle like puppet masters. ¶ As an adult, I'm still looking to turn people into my slaves, but I get the weird feeling that I've become a slave for others now. Oh, the irony!

**How did you start drawing comics? When did you see this as something you could do professionally?**

I didn't know *anything* about drawing comics when I started, I just started drawing a comic strip and sending it to newspaper syndicates. I had the bright-eyed enthusiasm of an all-American boy from some old movie—though I was the son of Lithuanian immigrants. I soon amassed a pile of rejection slips and decided that I needed to learn how to do it right, which meant art school. In art school I learned that I was just useless enough to become a fine artist, but then I noticed I had some talent so I became a cartoonist. That was my mistake—I could have spent the last twenty years making crappy fine art and being rich. I blame Art Spiegelman who was one of my teachers.

**What has been the high point of your cartooning career thus far?**

Working on *SpongeBob* was fun. And having *Underworld* books out.

**Your comics are hailed as some of the only funny gag strips around—at least by me, anyway. And anyone else with taste. What do you suppose has contributed to the recent trend of unfunny comics? Who will save us?**

I dunno . . . humor is hard, I suppose. It's much easier to do some arty piece of nothing that goes nowhere. I'm always blown away by how many cartoonists don't know how to write or tell a joke. But mostly I think that really funny writers go into TV where the money is better. Cartoonists start out as artists, not writers. No one will save us. We're doomed. But Sam Henderson, Michael Kupperman, Tony Millionaire, Peter Bagge, and Johnny Ryan are funny.

**Typically, how long does it take you to finish a strip?**

A few minutes. A little longer to write, pencil, ink, letter, and touch it up.

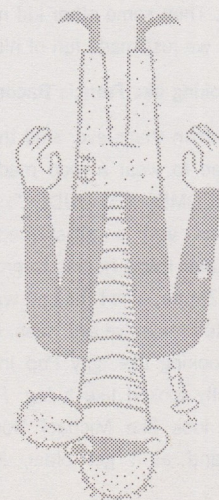
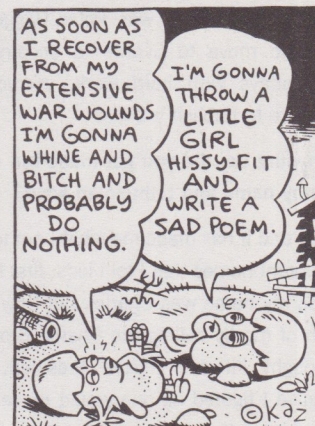
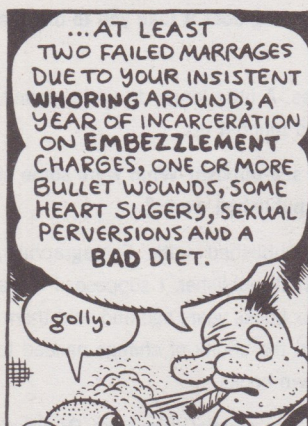
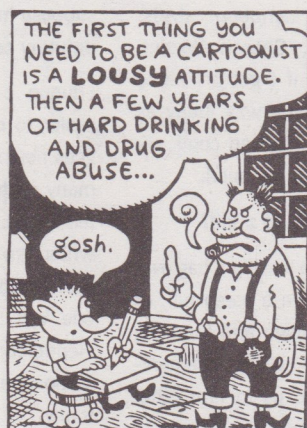
**Did you ever self-publish? What were some of your earliest published works?**

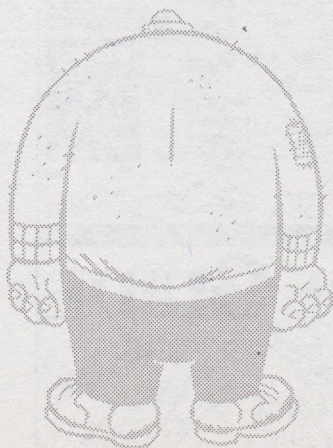
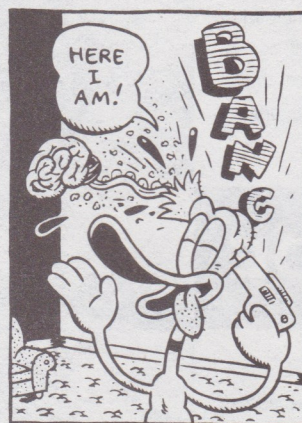
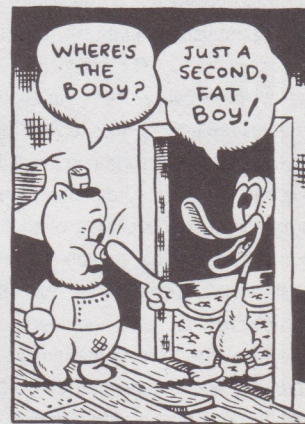
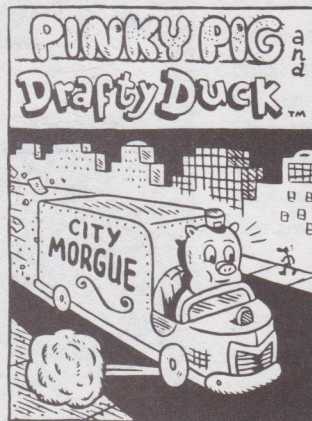
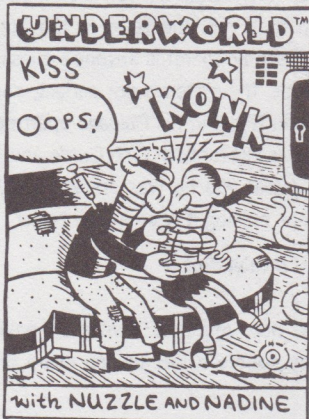
I've always published with Fantagraphics, which is a small publisher, I suppose. I did a few little xerox books years ago and sold them. I've never had the chunk of change needed to publish my own books.

**Since this is the special "Revenge Of Print" issue of *Punk Planet*, I think I am required to ask you fruity questions like "You seem ambitious about seeing your work in other mediums, such as TV. How devoted are you to comic books? Are comic books important?"**

Yes, I am very ambitious to see my work on TV and in the movies, but I'm still devoted to my own little comics collection. I still love reading comics. I think comics are very important. Not because they make a lot of money—they don't—but because of the talent on display. And because you can read them at home. I love a lot of contemporary art, but I have to go to a gallery to see it. Yes, I know the Internet. But nothing looks as good as an original or beautifully reproduced copy. You can have sex with an original. ©

## Selected Strips from *Underworld* by Kaz





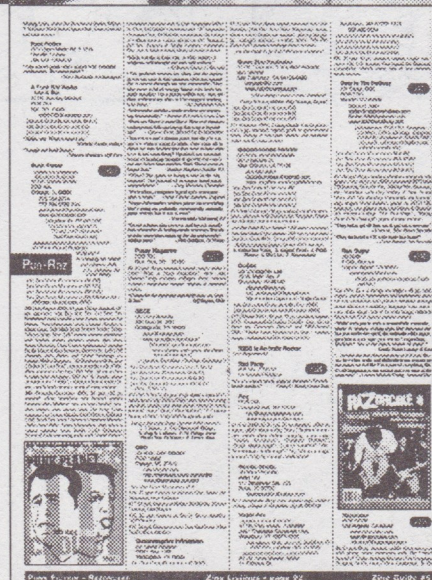
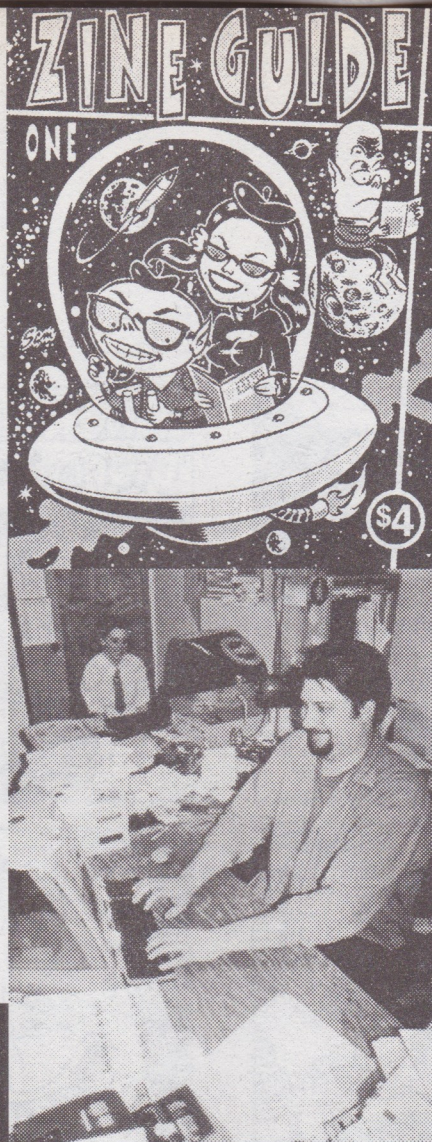
I'm convinced that Brent Ritzel is crazy. The editor of *Zine Guide*, the most complete listing of zines, independent, and underground press publications currently in print today, Ritzel (along with associate editor Alicia Dorr) has chosen to be the clearinghouse for every rag publishing right now. That means that he sees about 2,000 magazines and zines cross his desk every year. Two thousand. The man is insane and he likes it. And I guess I like it too because, well, someone needs to be crazy enough to be the recorder of all this amazing information that the underground churns out, and also because that person isn't me.

It wasn't Ritzel either, for many years. That job fell on the shoulders of R Seth Friedman, the much-maligned editor of *Factsheet Five*, the original zine about zines. *Factsheet Five* was a very different beast than *Zine Guide*. For starters, it organized zines into genre category (which meant that most every zine was in the "Medley" category, since zines by their nature often defy simple categoriza-

## Zg-ZINE GUIDE

tion), while *Zine Guide* goes for alphabetical listings with extensive cross-indexing in the bag of each issue. But the biggest difference is that *Factsheet Five* wrote reviews of zines—passing judgment on whether a zine was good or not. While I thought Friedman (and his crew of reviewers) did a good job, he made plenty of enemies in the process. *Zine Guide* takes a different approach, simply listing the contents of issues and giving a few objective remarks about the production techniques ("polished" or "rough"), page count, and frequency. The reviews are left up to quotes from people that sent in the surveys that make up the meat of the *Guide*.

See, Ritzel and company don't pass judgment, they let others do the job for them. The surveys (blanks of which are included in each issue) ask the person submitting to rank their most favorite and least favorite zines, as well as



give comments about the same. The insane folks of *Zine Guide* then tally up the votes to come up with a ranking system for the top 250 zines for the issue. Ritzel maybe be crazy enough to have thought it up, but whether or not he's also responsible for how well it works (more often than not, the zines in the upper ranks deserve to be there) is anyone's guess.

Of course, the system's not perfect, and I went to talk to Ritzel in his Chicago apartment that doubles as HQ for both *Zine Guide* and his other zine (I told you he was crazy) *Tailspins* about perhaps making it work a little better . . .

Interview by Daniel Sinker

**First of all, how much is Cometbus paying you? I'll pay double to get on top every time like he is.**

You know what? I would do anything to have the votes change a little bit. It kind of undermines things because there are so many great zines out there. To only have one finish number one five out of six times . . . It does drive me a little crazy. Aaron [Cometbus] always writes us a nice postcard afterwards that says something like, "Thanks a lot guys, I'm overwhelmed . . ." Well, it's not us. Each issue we tally between 600 and 900 surveys, so I'm surprised at how consistent it tends to be each time.

**What made you come up with the concept of doing zine reviews by statistics? *Factsheet Five* had really established the capsule zine review, but reading and reviewing all those zines really seemed to burn Seth Friedman out. You seem to take a much simpler and more analytical approach to it.**

Well, I'm 100 percent purebred German, so that's probably the number one reason. [laughs] It's just kind of the way that I approach the world. I started off as a physics and math major in college and ended up with degrees in philosophy and psychology, but I've always kind of approached things in a more structured manner. ¶ *Zine Guide* happened in a lot of ways as a response to *Factsheet Five*. There was a couple of issues of *Factsheet Five* that came out with "reviews" of *Tailspins* that were really only reviews of one article, even though there were 10-20 articles in each issue. I said to myself: "I'd rather just have a fucking listing

of what's inside a zine than a review of one of its articles" and that's kind of how it began. I was already keeping track of information on a lot of zines out there to know which ones to promo Tailspins to and as a result, I found myself keeping all of this information on the zines, like what their content tended to be, up-to-date contact information . . . I'm obsessive about information. So I thought, "Why not start something new?"

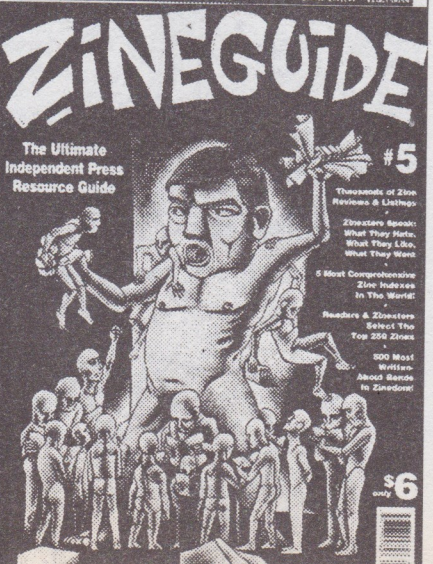
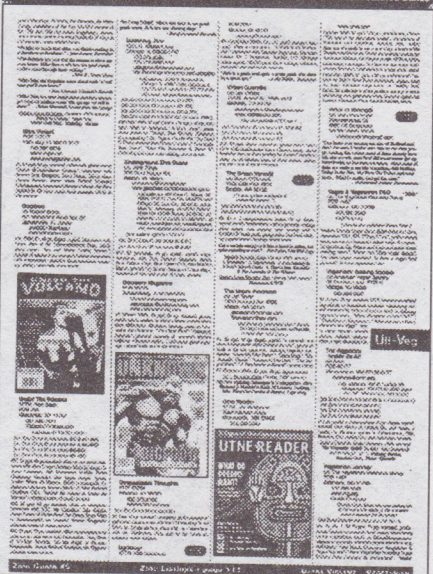
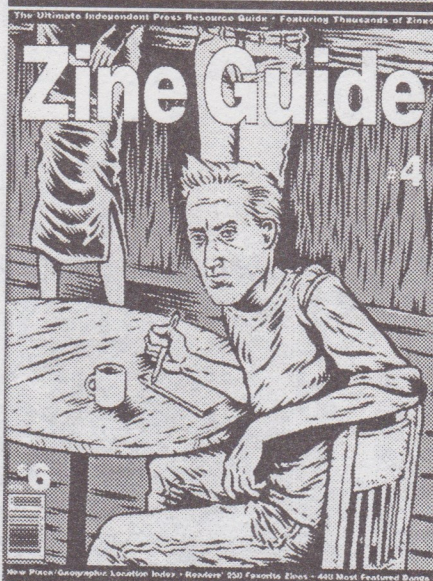
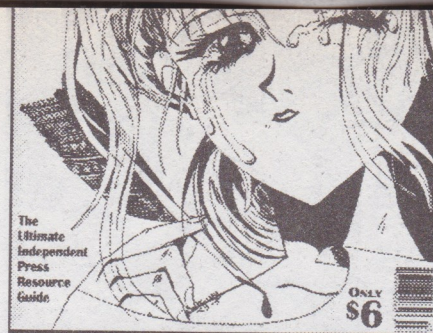
**Am I incorrect in timing, or hadn't *Factsheet Five* ended for a number of years before *Zine Guide* came out?**

No. Actually, *Zine Guide* #1 came out in December of '97 and in May of '98, *Factsheet Five* #65 came out, which was their last issue. It makes me feel good that *Factsheet Five* came out with one issue after we did because Seth was probably like, "Whew, I don't have to do this anymore! Someone else is going to continue the absurdity of trying to keep track of all of the zines."

**Is there ever a point where you just get sick of it? I mean there are so many zines to work through.**

Alicia: When I first got here, I just sat down and went through every single zine. In a way, it's really easy because of how structured it is—it's the same thing every time. It's not like I have to review each one. I'm just putting "this is rough" or "this is polished" so that you know what you're going to get if you order it. But now that we've started the zine of the week feature on our website, I'm like "this sucks, this sucks, this is a piece of paper for \$2.50, this is a postcard that people want two dollars for." It's actually pretty easy to pick out the ones that are shining through.

Brent: There does have to be some sort of editorial decision involved. But I think if a lot of people are voting for something, we try to give it representation because the point of *Zine Guide* is to be democratic. People think we're pulling the strings of zine culture, laughing all the way, as *Cometbus* sends us our monthly check. But that's not how it works. If a zine gets voted on three or four times, it's going to get added into *Zine Guide*. If a zine is important to a small group of zinesters, then we need to let people know about it.



**Where do you think that we are zine-wise in 2003?**

I think it's as strong as it's ever been. I think a lot of the bigger egos have disappeared a bit and the people that are in it for the *right* reasons have kind of risen to the top. There are zine festivals popping up all over the place—there was just a posting about one in LA, they're trying to get one in Seattle, and also there's a New Jersey zine festival now. The Bowling Green Underground Press Conference—or Allied Media Conference as it's now called—is going to be on its *fifth* year. I think that the number of zines may be down 30 or 40 percent in the last decade, but you can still name 200 or 300 zines that are absolutely amazing, and that are really essential to the cultural dialogue in their own way. I think a bit of the hype is gone, and in that sense, you get a bit more of an isolated zinester culture that doesn't want to share it with the mainstream. But I think that there's a little more benevolence among the people that are doing lots of stuff within the zine world now. Why else would there be so many zine festivals? No one is making any money off of this, but any time someone makes an effort it's pretty impressive.

**But just on a sheer numerical level, there are less zines being made?**

I would say that even in the last five years the number that we get in has dropped in about half. We were up to about 4,000 zines a year and now it's down to a little below 2,000.

I've felt like the mainstreaming of the Internet has taken a big chunk out of the middle of zine culture. You still have the folks doing the stuff on top—big, slick zines like *Punk Planet* and you still have the high school kids who hate their parents doing the cut'n'paste on the bottom, but the middle is much smaller than it used to be. That middle class—the folks that are great at writing but aren't interested in breaking the bank—are moving more and more to the web. In a way it makes sense: it's cheaper and it gets out to more people.

Brent: Those are the types of people that are going online, the people that don't want to sell ads and don't want it as a job. They love to write and want to share it with people, but it's

not the crappy little interpersonal bickering of a lot of personal zines.

Alicia: People send out mass e-mails or do LiveJournals now. They don't have to print it out on paper and they can get it out to more people.

**So then what do you guys see as the reason to keep doing print? Is there a reason to keep this in print?**

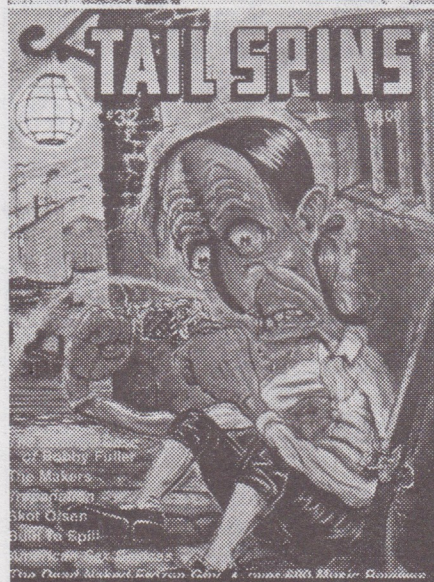
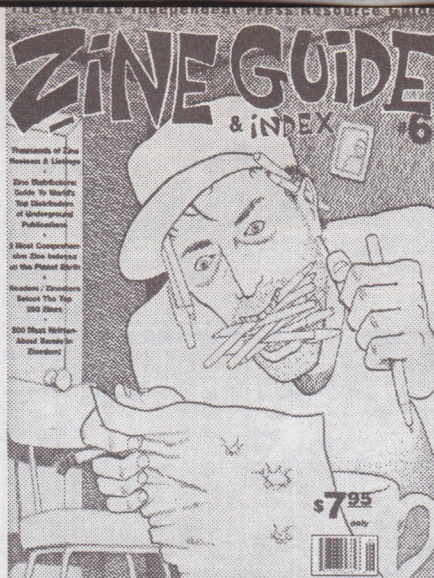
Yeah, because of where these things are read the most: the train and the toilet. Ultimately, reading is a physical medium and print gives you the convenience and flexibility to read any place you're comfortable or where you have an extra five or 10 minutes. ¶ I have to say that I'm actually really surprised at how few zines that have been in *Zine Guide* over the years have switched over to begin exclusively online. I would say maybe two percent, just a couple of dozen out of a thousand or so zines—I could probably name them.

**I think it's more a question of all of the zines that would have been done.**

Certainly it undermines things like that. But new tools and new uses, just kind of helps the zine thing grow. Since we've been selling the zine online, you don't have to do anything except transfer the data into the database and send it out. The Internet takes you around the world—it can get you anywhere. But I think it's not much more than glorified mailorder. There was a whole lot of hype and then it all fell through the floor.

**Anyone that does a zine at this level, it's obviously a labor of love, but you have two of them! That just seems crazy . . .**

But they don't have the frequency yours does. *Zine Guide* was something that I had to do. It was the right time and we had the facilities and a bit of the vision of how to do it. I know to some people it's too much like a telephone book, but it's there to provide more information than you would ever know what to do with. I think it does that job. ¶ We're actually developing a third zine. It's tentatively called "The New Physics" and it's about the revolutionary changes that are going on in the world of physics. There's a deeper understanding of physics that's being developed which, as all things, is being rejected by the mainstream



EACH AND EVERY DAY, AS OUR SOCIETY GETS MORE ABSURD AND MORE PATHOLOGICAL AND THE GOVERNMENT GETS MORE AND MORE DISCONNECTED FROM THE ENTIRE POPULATION, WE NEED ZINES AND THE UNDERGROUND PRESS MORE AND MORE.



because it would cause them to overthrow everything they've learned. This magazine is going to deal with that.

**So then what does *Tailspins* continue to do for you? It seems like you've been doing that for forever now.**

It's been a decade now. It meets the needs of the one percent of my time that I can pursue artistic pursuits—namely writing articles and researching things that I would have no excuse to research otherwise. In the last issue I did a piece on the history of cannibalism. We tend to like to write about the kinds of things that people don't like to think about or that are kept under wraps by the government. There are so many things to choose from, there's no end to that.

**Between the two zines, you're paying the bills?**

Yeah, for a few years now. I live modestly and have a little bit of debt. I try to have a couple of good vacations a year, but other than that, every penny I get goes back into this.

**Do you ever see a point where you would throw in the towel?**

Well, yes and no. I guess my whole life is a constant evolution. That's such a tough question . . . I maybe see *Tailspins* turning into something else, but I see *Zine Guide* continuing. There's a big commitment to doing it and a big need and demand for it. People don't necessarily want it but they need it, and that's a great position to be in. ¶ Each and every day, as our society gets more absurd and more pathological and the government gets more and more disconnected from the entire population, we need zines and the underground press more and more. There's so much information out there now, especially with the web, and it's our job as journalists to be digging through this and finding the stuff that people need to read. I think about the articles that *Punk Planet* had on the genocide of Iraqi children four or five years ago—I've been thinking a lot about that for the last few days. If people would read the underground press, they would be so ahead of things, and we'd be so much better equipped to assist our society in moving it forward. ©

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Everything you've heard about Everett True is true. Well, most of it anyway. Chances are, what you've heard has gone something like this: As a mouthy, opinionated rock journalist in the early-'90s, True was credited with discovering grunge, introducing Kurt to Courtney and later busting the door wide open for the Sub Pop bands with a now infamous story in Britain's *Melody Maker*. For the next few years he stumbled across America in a haze of free drinks and famous friends, writing the occasional article about his exploits and creating one hell of a story along the way. This story includes its share of ups and downs. Hey, he got to be great friends with Kurt Cobain—which meant he also had to go to his funeral. He tagged along with Love during her blaze of glory—which meant he had to spend years putting up with her shit. He spent night after night getting wasted with a cast of amazing drinking buddies—which meant he had to wake up years later with a case of alcoholism and nothing to show for it but a bunch of blurry memories.

Last year True collected all of those up and downs and things you've heard with *Live Through This*, a sometimes sad, sometimes confusing look back at his time spent as one of the leading voices in the alt-rock movement. And, you know, it was a pretty cool book and all, but it barely holds a candle to *Careless Talk Costs Lives* (CTCL), the independent magazine he started a few months earlier.

Currently headed up with friend and longtime *NME* photographer Steve Gullick, CTCL is classic True: bitchy, babbling and brilliant. He's still got his finger on the pulse of America—constantly discovering a new group of Yanks with which to hang—but somehow True's loving rambles and off-the-cuff tirades sound older, wiser and more reflective than they did all those years ago. And just to prove that some things never go out of style, True is still doing things *his* way.

Interview by Trevor Kelley

**How old are you now?**

I'm 41.

**Do you ever fear you're going to run out of things to say?**

I never felt I have anything to say, so the question doesn't even arise. I'm fucking *useless* with small talk. You know, "How about this or that TV show?" Fuck that.

**Come on, now. You've made a living out of small talk. It's part of your job.**

I hope I haven't made a living out of small talk! Oddly, I've just come back from helping host a "fanzine discussion" at the *Careless Talk Costs Lives* evening at the ICA, where I was DJing, introducing the bands, sitting in on a panel. So you would think I was chatting with everyone afterward, right? Wrong. Hmm. Maybe it's my age?

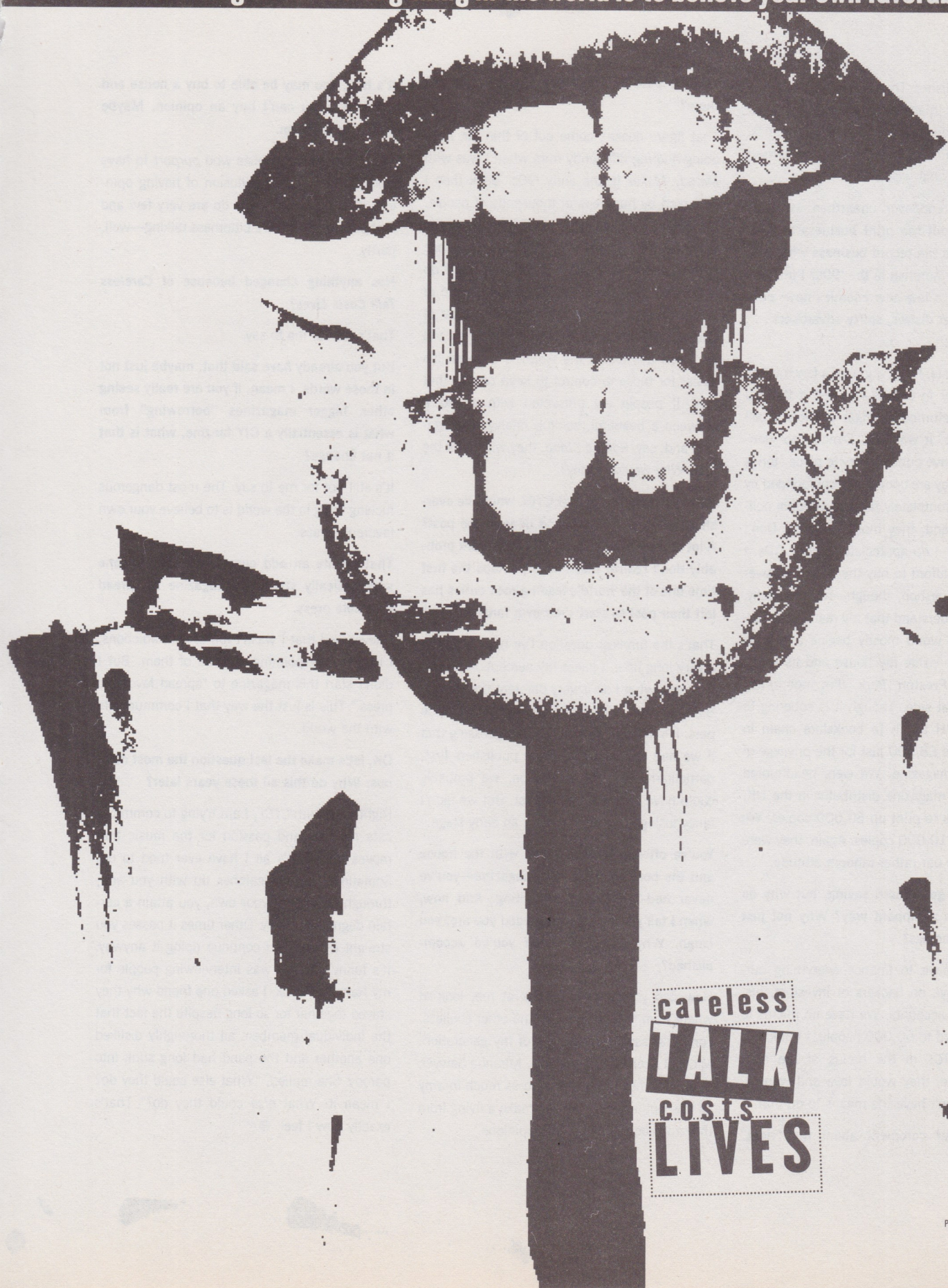
**With all of this in mind, tell me about the magazine's title. Boring question, I know, but it seems like there's a little more there than, I don't know, *Punk Planet*.**

I guess we just felt that "careless talk" is something that the music press specializes in. It was Gullick's idea. It was a war-time slogan, used as propaganda in England during World War II—kind of like "loose lips sink ships." As coincidence had it, our first editorial was written September 10, 2001.

**When you started CTCL, you described the magazine's goal as "destroying the music industry with 12 issues—or else we've failed." How's that working out for you?**

Great. Other magazines with big business money behind them are launching and borrowing heavily from our template and design, but missing the point. We seem to have earned a certain, grudging respect, but we aren't in the business of chasing money or ads or press. And you kind of need to be, especially if you're trying to destroy the music industry. ¶ *Careless Talk Costs Lives* couldn't exist if it went through

The most dangerous fucking thing in the world is to believe your own favorable press.



careless  
**TALK**  
costs  
**LIVES**

an outside publisher. The concept is anathema to what we do. Imagine the focus group meetings: "So what do you have planned for the next issue, lads?" "Er, we have no idea. Whatever takes our fancy that week."

**Has this new endeavor unearthed as many ugly things about the print business as your writing did with the record business when you traipsed across America in the '90s? I imagine there are quite a few new enemies now: publicists, deadbeat distros, shifty advertisers . . . ugh, publicists.**

Oh boy: publicists. I took a job for a few months at *The Stranger* in Seattle—I loved it there. I don't think I returned a *single* publicist's call the whole time. It was ace. E-mail, too—fantastic! We do have publicists try to place stories in *CTCL*, but they are continually confounded by our slapdash, completely random editorial policy. So, in the end, they mostly give up. Don't get me wrong—I *do* appreciate the free CDs. I really couldn't afford to buy them. ¶ To answer your original question, though—no, not really. You have to understand that my reality and perception of the world mostly begins and ends with the office inside my house and its lovely view across Preston Park. I'm not really involved on that side. Though it is sobering to realize that WH Smith [a bookstore chain in England] wants £8,500 just for the privilege of *stocking* our magazine. We were headhunted by the largest magazine distributor in the UK, who wanted us to print up 50,000 copies. We currently print 10,000 copies. Again, they were confounded by our rather random attitude.

**OK, this may go without saying, but why do things in such a flippant way? Why not just print 50,000 copies?**

Because we have to finance everything ourselves. We have no backers or investors, just our own bank accounts. We have no means to spread the word to 50,000 people. I think that if you put *CTCL* in the hands of the right 50,000 people, they would love and want it, but we just don't have the means to do that.

**Regarding your comment about the "right"**

**50,000 people. Are these people really out there?**

That figure doesn't come out of thin air. I am doing *nothing* differently from when I was with *Melody Maker* in the early '90s. Back then I was read by hundreds of thousands of people. Ultimately, it comes down to whether the music we cover (yeah, remember *that*) has resonance with that many people. I believe it does. I do not believe that the average person is stupid or favors mediocrity over beauty. It's a matter of education. The reason there's so much gray and so much detritus in the world is because it's easier for those in control to keep control that way. If people are presented with a choice between a beautiful, soulful, intelligent magazine and, say, *Rolling Stone*, they will go for the first. Why wouldn't they?

**Were you ever afraid that CTCL would be overshadowed by what you had done in the past? A lot of people unfamiliar with your work probably don't realize that this is perhaps the first time one of the world's leading rock critics has left their post to start their own fanzine.**

That's the funniest question I've been asked in a very long time. I guess my perception of who I am and what I do is very different from yours. But thank you. ¶ Honestly, I try not to live in the past. It's difficult, sometimes. I'm guessing that if we had approached outside publishers first, particularly with my reputation, we probably could have gotten some interest. But we didn't fancy losing autonomy at such an early stage.

**You've often said that—even with the house and the book and now the magazine—you've never had a "career" in writing. And now, when I tell you how well regarded you are, you laugh. Why shrug off what you've accomplished?**

How can you ask that? Look at me, look at where I am now. Look at all the other soulless, corporate ass-licking writers of my generation: Michael Azerrad, Craig Marks, Miranda Sawyer, et al. OK, they might not have as much *infamy* as me, but at least they can make a living from their mediocre, opinion-less opinions.

**It's true. You may be able to buy a house and a car, but you can't buy an opinion. Maybe that's the problem.**

Yep. Even the columnists who *purport* to have opinions only give the illusion of having opinions. The ones that really do are very few and far between. But that's bitterness talking—well, partly.

**Has anything changed because of *Careless Talk Costs Lives*?**

That's not for me to say.

**But you already *have* said that, maybe just not in those words. I mean, if you are really seeing other, bigger magazines "borrowing" from what is essentially a DIY fanzine, what is that if not change?**

It's still not for me to say. The most dangerous fucking thing in the world is to believe your own favorable press.

**That's quite an odd comment from someone who basically started a magazine to spread favorable press.**

I never said that I wasn't full of contradictions, I was merely pointing out one of them. But I didn't start this magazine to "spread favorable press." This is just the way that I communicate with the world.

**OK, let's make the last question the most obvious: Why do this all these years later?**

Right now, with *CTCL*, I am trying to communicate my love and passion for the music that moves me. That's all I have ever tried to do. Sometimes fashion catches up with you and, through no fault of your own, you attain a certain degree of infamy. Other times it passes you straight by and you continue doing it anyway. It's funny. When I was interviewing people for my Ramones book, I asked one friend why they stayed together for so long despite the fact that the individual members all thoroughly disliked one another and the band had long sunk into parody. She replied, "What else could they do? I mean it: What *else* could they do?" That's exactly how I feel. ©

# the DIRTBOMBS

By Everett True  
From *Careless Talk Costs Lives* #11, February 2002

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED: *Ultralight In Black*. It's the latest Dirtbombs album. Got it? Shove it on. Throw this magazine out the window . . . and the rest of your possessions too.

Give me a definition of rock'n'roll.

"Rock'n'roll is about honesty and expression."

Give me a rock'n'roll experience.

"That would be Mick and I throwing a set of drums down the stairs at our studio," Dirtbombs bassist Jim Diamond continues. "Throwing a computer out the window, and recording it."

God fucking damn it all, I want to dance. I want to feel the sweet sensation of the ground moving unsteadily beneath my feet, one leg barely in rhythm with the other, brow covered by a stickiness not caused by alcohol or age, mouth working wordlessly, head bobbing up and down, infused with the exhilaration of knowing that this—this moment, this song, this sudden collision of electricity and melody—is what it feels like to be truly, gloriously, wantonly alive. I want to feel shivers cascading to my heels. I want to keep blasting the volume up and up. I want to be able to leap up on rooftops and shout it in the proletariat and Islington's grey, uncomprehending faces: THIS IS SOUL! I want every next moment to be as glorious as the one before, to listen to the Isleys and The Saints and Troggs and half-a-dozen motorbikes braying in the deep shadows of night simultaneously.

I want to dress in black, cool, studied, shades a matted mess on my shaking face, life a riot of colour (pink and gold and red). I want to conga with Billy Liar, dance on the grave of dead and given-up friends and shout in their comatose skulls, leaven this existence with an enthusiasm that is all the more wonderful because it is so primal. I want to fuck the world and give birth to nobility, a new strain of life.

I have no sense of cool, no idea what's right and wrong. Just 87 minutes ago, I switched a (classic, but dull) Bob Dylan album for ELO's (wrongly derided) *Greatest Hits* because the time for poetry and Lenny Kravitz resumes is long past. I want to DANCE! Dance like we do down at Chris King's Girl Group night at the Hanbury, the sweet/harsh harmonies of The Royalettes and The Honey Bees and The Whyte Boots shimmering in the air. Dance, like that time in 1980 at a Ramones show when I pogo-ed the entire breadth of the Electric Ballroom to embrace the only other shirtless person present, only to discover it was my brother, the man who'd turned me onto rock'n'roll in the first place. Dance, like there's nothing corrupt in life whatsoever—just sinews and stutters and the occasional bittersweet burst of sex.

Spontaneity is still what matters.

I want The Dirtbombs.

"My name's Patrick Pantano. I'm one of the drummers in The Dirtbombs, also a drummer in The Come Ons. My definition of rock'n'roll is teenage angst put to beat music and everything else thrown in just so long as it's got some teen angst. An example of that would have to be this time when I was dancing at a soul music, beat music party and I broke my nose on a girl's forehead while we were dancing. I was bleeding and I didn't seem to care because I was so drunk. I had a great time, but my ass at that time was probably pretty rock."

Pat turns to the rest of the ensemble, and challenges us to disagree. Murmurs of assent come from all around.

"I'm Mick Collins," says *Careless Talk*'s new cover star. He's a literal man, is Mick. "I don't have a definition of rock'n'roll *per se* except that it's music you can dance to that has lots of guitars in it. One of my favourite rock'n'roll examples was throwing that drum set, so I'll give you another one. I used to be part of a teen social club years ago and we threw a party that was 'new wave' music. There was this weird moment when I realised I was looking at 500 black kids doing the twist to 'I-2 X-U' by Wire. That was one of the defining moments of my life."

That must have been a pretty fucking fast dance.

"Oh, it was great," Mick nods.

"I'm Ben Blackwell and I drum with The Dirtbombs," says the blue-eyed, blonde-haired boy on my right. "If your parents like it, it's not rock'n'roll. I don't know if I can give you an example involving my parents, but last night was kind of fun."

What happened last night?

"We were just trying to have some fun, you know," the drummer explains. "We were falling down on stage and everyone loved it. It's like we've invented rock'n'roll."

"We're not trying to destroy anything," Jim adds.

"I'm Thomas Potter and I play guitar," states another voice. "My definition of rock'n'roll is unbridled rhythm."

"Can you give an example?" asks Mick.

"Of what?" Tom shoots back confused. It's a confusing situation. Seven of us round a small table pre-show in Highbury's Garage venue, no beer and the whiskey long since disappeared. None of us can figure out the lack of alcohol. These Detroit rockers have driven all the way from Birmingham where due to a calamitous misunderstanding they were served vegetarian fare, and they're thirsty goddamn it.

"A defining rock'n'roll moment," Mick clarifies. He's sharp, this Mr Collins. He likes to have his affairs in order—at least, until the booze hits.

"That would be the times my wife had to drive me home from shows in a trailer while I puked out the window," he muses.

Do you have an affinity for ditches? (I ask, remembering the time I deliberately sought out one in Melbourne having read John Steinback's *The Grapes Of Wrath* only a few weeks before.)

"There aren't too many ditches where we live in Detroit," replies Pat, "but if there were, Tom would be . . ."

"I'd be leaping in," the guitarist interrupts. "Rock'n'roll!"

I was introduced to the music of The Dirtbombs only a few months ago.

Their singer, Mick Collins I already knew something about.

**I want to fuck the world and give birth to nobility, a new strain of life.**

He's a 45-year-old dude, with a chequered past. I used to search out 7" singles from his bugged out punk band The Gories during the early '90s, usually to little avail. They've long disappeared in a haze of Riot Boy largesse, doubtless gone to some damn druggie hipster's room with my third Ramones album and Go Team singles. Sigh. Among others, Mick has helped out that demonic and unsavoury distillation of music's misogynistic core Andre Williams (sample Andre stage banter: "See that pussy there? That's some mighty fine pussy there"). Mick is great at tearing it up to a heavy motor city beat. He possesses an energy, a naivety that is central to all great rock music—The Langley Schools Music Project, Them, James Brown, Jonathan Richman. Mick understands the need for simplicity, for some raw. Some nights, his guitar won't even be plugged in.

(Fuck, don't you wish other bands . . . Limp Bizkit, U2 . . . would take a tip from that?)

Bassist Jim Diamond I should of known about. He's the engineer behind many great Detroit punk records of the past five years—Slumber Party, the Von Bondies, the terrifyingly great Bantam Rooster, the sweet, sweet female-led sassiness of The Come Ons, and so many more. He's stocky, full on and ROCKS.

. . . Oh yeah, and there's all the rest too.

After the interview, Ben (who by some considerable distance is the baby of the band) thanks me for introducing him to Nirvana and asks to write for *Careless Talk*. Cheers Ben. Any time you want to contribute a journal . . . He's the heartthrob, the fan, and solidity. His e-mail address partly boasts the moniker SUBPOPFAN1. But shit, time is wasting away and I need to give you a warning: 1998's *Horndog Fest*, the debut Dirtbombs album originally conceived as three 7" singles, sports a dire "funny animal" sleeve (what sort of retard cartoonist invests animals with sexuality?) and that in itself should be enough to alert you. Not that it did me, of course. I was committed. It's not that the album is bad. Sure, it has balls. Just that it pales next to *Ultraglide In Black*, and why settle for second-best, ever?

Ah fuck it. "Do You See My Love (For You Growing)" has just come on the player and I have some serious grooving to do. So I only heard The Dirtbombs a few short months ago when Steve bootlegged their album cos I refused to let him out of my house without it. So I'm not cool. Never trust anyone who thinks they're cool.

"The first time I realised I wanted to play rock'n'roll," recalls Tom. "Was when my mother bought me a Music Machine single, 'Talk Talk', when I was five. That was such a gnarly song it really got me going. When I was in fourth grade, some friends and I dressed up like KISS and mimed through a talent show. All the kids at school were going crazy. I'm like, 'I can live with this.'"

He smiles, shows his teeth. Someone has found the rider, sorted the entire band out with a Heinekin, but not the critic. Fuck man. I'm the most talented one here. (I recall that I once got into an argument with Justin from New Model Army when he discovered I was drunk before I sat down to start the interview. "That's totally unprofessional," he ranted. "I would never get on stage drunk." "Maybe that's why you're so fucking boring," I snapped back. The evening went downhill from there.)

"Whenever I had to go to the dentist, my father would bribe me with a comic," Pat recollects. "That progressed onto the Top 40

singles behind the counter at the store. I remember getting 'Love Machine' by The Miracles and thinking the drums were great." He chuckles at the memory. "Later, these kids at school were saying 'we're going to put together a band' because one kid's older brother was in a band and they had all the equipment at his house. I said 'I want to play the drums.' We planned all week that on Saturday we were going to practice, that was all we talked about in school. We showed up at this kid's house to pick up these instruments that we'd never played before. These four girls showed up with soda pops and pizza for us, they had heard what we were going to do. We made the connection that there is something immediately and strangely attractive about someone playing music."

Everyone nods, knowingly.

"So I wanted to play music through a combination of loving the drums and girls giving me soda pops and pizza."

"Soda pops and pizza has evolved," smirks Jim.

"It's still the same thing," Pat counters.

"They're still bringing it," laughs Mick.

"I never kissed those girls," Pat sighs.

So what about you, Mr Collins? When did you first realise that rock'n'roll was going to be your life?

"I don't have a moment," the singer replies. "I know that I wanted to play music. I don't know that I ever really wanted to play rock'n'roll. It's just the music I play. I was watching KC & The Sunshine Band on the Orange Bowl Jamboree. Every night before the game, they have these extravaganzas or variety shows and this was the one for 1975. I saw the band and I was watching this four-piece horn section, doing their synchronised dancing and these guys were just doing their thing. This was the greatest thing I'd ever seen. I'd never heard of lip-synching. So I begged and pleaded for a trombone and I got it. Of course, the next year, KISS did 'Rock And Roll All Night' but I already had a trombone . . ."

"I was probably about nine," recalls Baby Ben, "hanging out with my uncle who everyone here knows. He was playing a Deep Purple record. There was me, my brother and my uncle sitting there, we weren't even playing music but I just had this idea that this was what it was like to be in a band, and we should be in a band. I never did anything musical until I got turned on by Nirvana. I slowly got into it."

Ben pauses, takes a gulp from his bottle.

"In high school," he continues, "I said to my uncle 'All my friends are playing guitars. I want to do that.' He said, 'fuck guitar. There's 10 guitar players on your block already. You should play drums.' He gave me a drum set and later that week I was in my basement, just messing around with it. And the same thing: girls showed up. It was totally unplanned but girls from down the street were like 'Hey, how's it going?' Yeah, sure, check it out."

"What was the question?" asks Jim.

I don't know, what was the question? The voice of order booms through.

"When did you know you wanted to play music, the defining moment?" reiterates Mick.

"I never had a defining moment," his co-producer states. "I was born to rock. In 1970, when I was five, I hung out with the

older kids down the street who showed me dirty pictures: 'Hey Jimmy, what do you think of these *Playboys*?' I was like 'Oh, nice tits.' The older kids and I would get guitars, and we'd pantomime Beatles songs to the neighbor kids on the street."

Ben has another zeitgeist moment he wants to share with his buddies.

"My mother told me this," he says. "She bought me a toy drum for Christmas when I was about three, and apparently I was really excited. She said that within an hour of getting it, I took a cinder block and threw it at the drums. It went through the head and that was the end of it."

"That's a Dirtbombs rudiment right there," Jim points out.

Tell me a few more.

"I can define one right now," Pat says. "We used to joke that you can't be in The Dirtbombs if you've got less than 1,000 LPs. I've got 7,000, Jim's got one, Tom's got 4,000, Ben's got about 2,000. I've been buying records on my own probably since 1974 and in that time I've only ever sold two records and I'm sorry I sold them."

"I was working in a record store and I quit my job so I decided I would sell half my record collection," sighs Mick. "That was the only time. Our collections mean we have incredibly diverse interests. Our comfort music is stuff that none of the others really like."

So what is your comfort music?

"I like soul and jazz kind of beat music from the '60s," Mick replies.

"I like '70s funk and hip-hop," Pat counters. "What Mick is getting at is that I like things like Rose Tattoo."

"Rose Tattoo and AC/DC," agrees Ben. "I like listening to girls sing, The Crystals, The Ronettes or newer stuff. I like Queens Of The Stone Age, but that's not comfort music. I have a big affinity for Kim Deal. Her voice totally puts me at ease."

"I go through phases," Jim chimes in. "A lot of time I don't listen to music at all but I listen to a lot of Mexican ballads, a lot of '50s and '60s Mexican music."

"For me, it's jazz and classical," finishes Tom. "I like a lot of the romantic classical music."

Back in the early '90s, a line in the sand was quickly drawn when it came to grunge music. (I'm a big fan of hype, but you have to learn how to separate The Small Faces from Spencer Davis, The Gories from Jon Spencer, Ramones from The Clash.) On one side were bands with passion, instinct and soul: Nirvana, Mudhoney, (early) Afghan Whigs. On the other were Pearl Jam, and others far too heinous to name. Commentators and fans became confused, thought that one was the other and that the line was unnecessary. The line is always necessary. It's the job of the precious few like me to deflate the pompous, and ridicule those worthy of ridicule. Radiohead may very well be well meaning fellows with their record collections in the right place (rather like Eddie Vedder) but fuck do they make a god-awful noise. I have heard only one Andrew WK track, and that's enough to assure me that he has as much to do with rock music as Blue. I do mean Blue, don't I? That pre-packaged boy metal band. Or is that Linkin Park? It's so hard to differentiate.

So we come to Detroit and New York City, and the fact that—

because of the media, and its tendency to only go for drinking buddies and the people that cosy on up to it—that NYC (like London and Sydney) finds it very difficult indeed to produce a half-decent rock band, because there is no time to develop.

On the one side of the divide is The White Stripes (even if they are a little too knowing for their own good, at least they strip it all back down) and the righteous Detroit clan, led by our own Dirtbombs and of course *Ultraglide In Black*, a collection of soul covers originally done by folk like Stevie Wonder and Curtis Mayfield and Marvin Gaye, strained through the most intense guitar distortion and purified by noise, and why the *self-billing invoice* haven't you bought a copy yet? Stop reading this now . . .

And on the other are The Strokes.

It's that simple.

"I was thinking the other day of how The Strokes always come up in conversation because they've got this big popularity now," begins Pat, "and everyone in this band is confused as to why. The reason I dislike them—and this may sound like a compliment—is because their music sounds like a conscious decision on their part. They could have sounded like anything. It's not pure. All of us—maybe not Jim who's pretty versatile—but most of us when we play and get in a room, it sounds like The Dirtbombs. So you could run an Otis Reading tune through us and it's going to sound like us, no matter what we do. We filter all these diverse genres through this mess and it comes out sounding like us."

"I don't know," mulls Jim. "It's having fun, you know, it's not like we're saying 'it sounds like this.' We just play and fuck it up, see what happens. You see bands on stage like The Strokes or The White Stripes, even though I love them, and it seems like they're too serious. They could be having a great time but the demeanour on their faces is like it's World War III."

"Whereas," chuckles Mick, "with The Dirtbombs, I love when Jim is playing a bass part and it fucks up and he turns around and . . ."

Jim shoots Mick a glare.

"I don't fuck things up a lot," the bassist laughs.

"I'm not saying it happens often," Mick agrees, "but when it happens, you turn around and you and me just look at each other and we both laugh. I have a feeling that if I were in the crowd and I saw a band that were laughing and smiling and enjoying themselves, I would feel that they were doing something right."

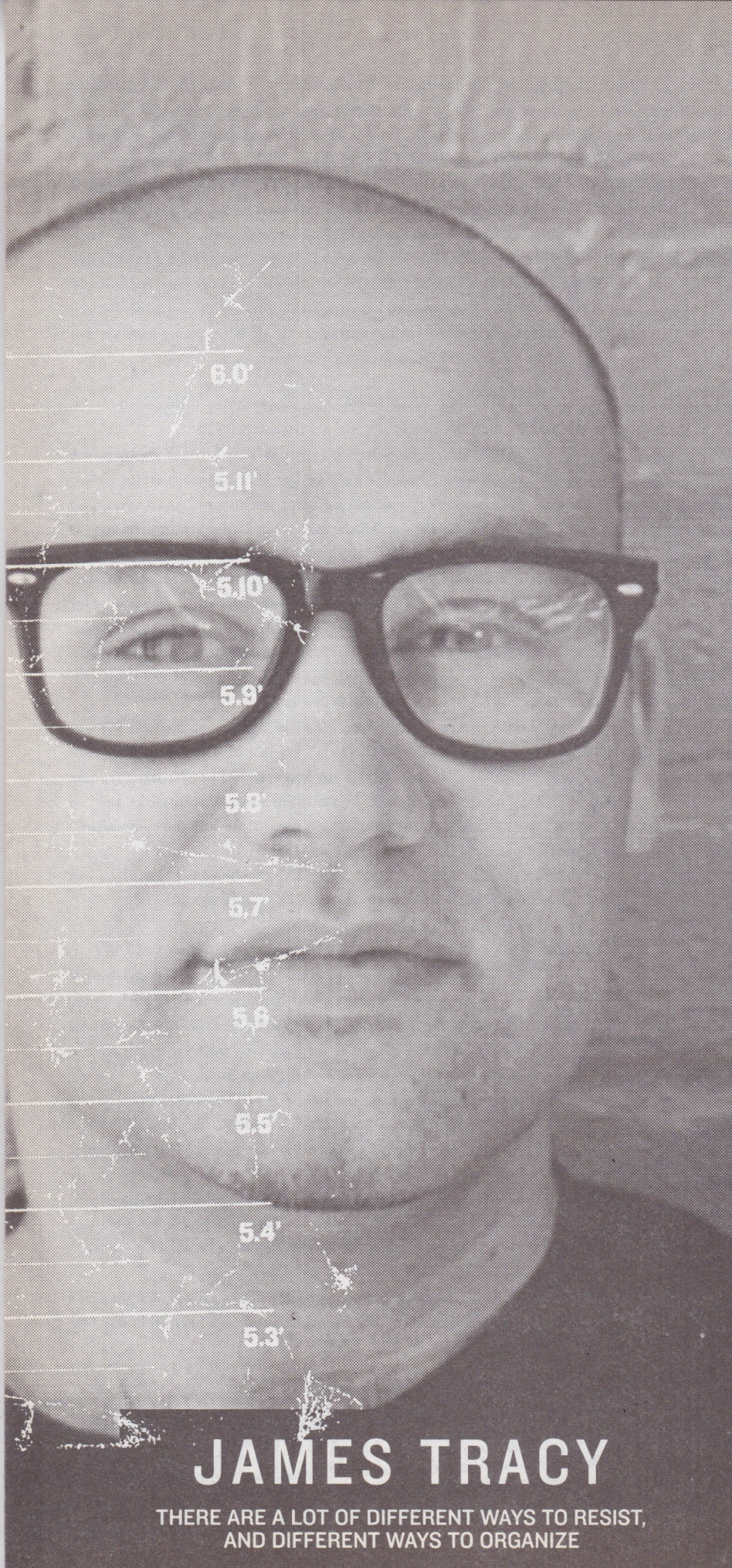
"I'm generally laughing the whole time," admits Jim.

"Sure," agrees Tom. "Like 'Man, we suck. Woo hoo!'"

"The concepts behind the band just evolved," Mick explains. "What I like about The Dirtbombs is that I can pick a genre or something, I can say 'Let's do a glam rock single' and the band will be like 'Sure.' Or 'Let's do a whole album of soul covers I liked when I was a kid' and they're like 'OK. We don't care.' They're willing to go any place."

"It's never contrived," Pat states with finality. "It's always pure. It's always going to sound like us. The Dirtbombs is just a beautiful mess." ©

**So I only heard The Dirtbombs a few short months ago when Steve hootlegged their album cos I refused to let him out of my house without it. So I'm not cool. Never trust anyone who thinks they're cool.**



# JAMES TRACY

THERE ARE A LOT OF DIFFERENT WAYS TO RESIST,  
AND DIFFERENT WAYS TO ORGANIZE

**W**alk the streets of San Francisco's Mission District with author and activist James Tracy and one thing sticks out: at the corner of 16th and Mission, everyone knows him, and everyone—from the jonesing junkie to the suited up, cell-phone toting professional—receives the same hello and the same respect. James has a beat, and he walks it. Over the past decade, through a succession of organizational affiliations and ghetto offices, that beat has helped Tracy to hold together anti-gentrification projects that won concrete reforms in public housing and made real improvements in the lives of many working-class people.

At the same time, Tracy has always wandered into and out of media-making, from fronting bands and zines in the early '90s, through periodic lapses into journalism (including *Punk Planet*, to name one publication), to his current small press Little Red Books and his spoken word troupe, Molotov Mouths. The anthology he edited, *The Civil Disobedience Handbook: A Brief History and Practical Advice for the Politically Disenchanted*, is out now on Manic D Press. And if he ever finishes co-writing his long-awaited book on housing and gentrification struggles in 1990s San Francisco, it should be a motherfucker.

James is experienced enough to realize that pragmatic and radical is not necessarily a contradiction in terms, and this self-described "anti-authoritarian" is ecumenical enough to name his small press Little Red Books. The left would be in better shape, and the world would be a better place, if it had more James Tracys.

Interview by **Aaron Shuman**

**You manage to pretty equitably balance your writing and your organizing. Is it a matter of putting down one to pick up the other, or do you do both simultaneously?**

It's a constant struggle. Progressive writers that *don't* involve themselves with community struggles put out a hell of a lot more books than I ever will, but I can't sacrifice my involvement with community work just to write a book. Many people do activism for a really long time, and then all of a sudden they write a decent manuscript about it, get published, and you don't ever hear from 'em again. ¶ What I try to do with my success and my inroads as a writer is to kick open the door and leave it open for all

my friends to come through—especially the people that the average left intelligentsia don't really give a fuck about, except in the abstract form. I'm deeply suspicious of leftist scholarship that's not based in some kind of activism. It doesn't mean it has to be the exact same activism—it doesn't have to be a cookie-cutter—but if you're not involved with a community and if you're not involved with the issues that you're writing about, there's something missing. ¶ Everybody should go to where they feel they have the most talent and ability, but there is a certain kind of intellectual privilege when you say "I'm just writing about this stuff; I'm just documenting it." When it comes down to licking envelopes, putting out flyers, walking through neighborhoods, or sitting through annoying meetings, you're nowhere to be found. ¶ A lot of the things that people do for their activism—in guerrilla media and things like that—actually provide a very safe space for people, where they don't challenge their own privilege. There's a big difference between a video activist who actively uses his or her skills to spread those skills with people who don't have access—and to help in developing a new cadre of video activists that comes from the bottom of the barrel—and the guy who just shows up at the protest and videotapes it, gets all the glory, but doesn't ever try to connect their work to it.

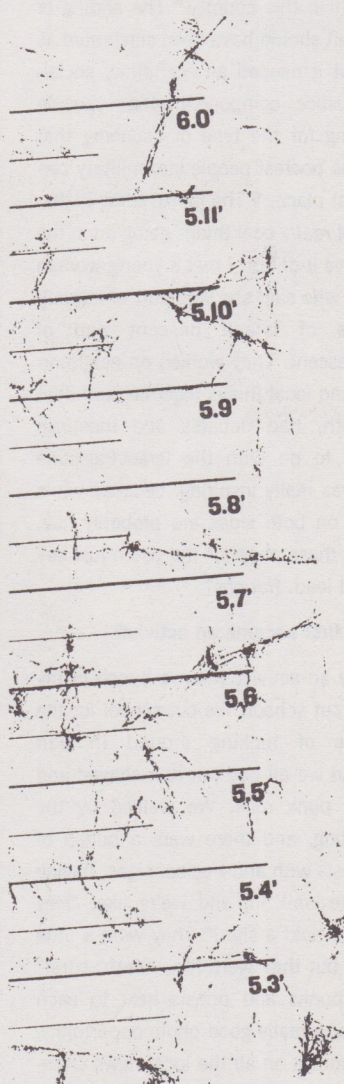
**What relationship do you see between your political work—the organizing—and your cultural work? Do you see them as separate, as an extension of the other?**

There's a direct relationship. The *Civil Disobedience Handbook*, the bulk of it is just a list of the bare bones things you need to pull off an action. It was originally just an e-mail primer that I gave to different groups around the country when we did the National Day of Housing Action in 2001. Some people asked me, "Oh, we're interested in doing this but we've never done it before—can you write the bare bones down, and we'll figure out the rest?" So that's all that was. Coincidentally, Manic D Press was working on this civil disobedience project, and we just brought the two things together. ¶ As far as the poetry that I do with Molotov Mouths, everybody in the group are activists in different ways and all of our work is enriched by being involved with the struggle. I think we've finally gotten to the point where we've been able to transcend slogans and dogma and just bring

out the human side of being an activist through our poetry. We've had discussions at some of our performances where people have commented that we make it sound so easy. And that might be dangerous, but we at least make it sound like you can just be a regular human being and you can still raise your voice.

**What have you learned from touring with the book?**

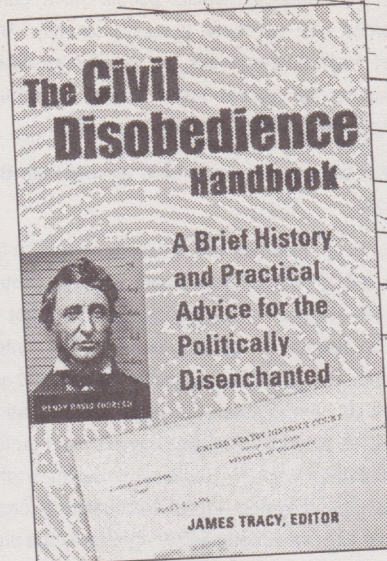
First of all, I learned that it's really important for the left to try to communicate with the center. It was always like coming home when I got to do an event at an infoshop or an activist center, but it's also really cool to talk to people who are very concerned about the way that the nation and the world's going, but haven't been pulled into activist work. ¶ I spoke with a woman who was a churchgoing Baptist who basically organized and ran a food pantry, which was the only food pantry in her area. Speaking with her, I realized that her worldview was very similar to liberation theology, even though she considers herself to be conservative Republican. But when I talked to her, I found out that she had quite a few things in common with the types of clergy that shut down the School of the Americas. ¶ I met a laid-off factory worker in Bellingham who gave me a ride back up to Canada. She didn't come to my reading because she was that interested in civil disobedience; it was because she was laid off, and this bookstore's free events were an affordable form of entertainment. And we had this great conversation on the way back about layoffs and global economics from *her* perspective, not mine. It was illuminating. ¶ I also think that the most important thing is that different generations of activists don't even talk to each other. In one appearance I did, it was very apparent that the Earth First kids and the old-school peace activists, who were very proud to let me know they trained under the Berrigan brothers, didn't even talk to each other. They actually had *animosity* towards each other. The question and answer session turned into that episode from *The Simpsons* where the adults in the town are singing "Kids!" and the kids are singing "Adults!" I basically told 'em, "Cut the shit—if you guys don't start talking with each other, the Bush Administration is gonna lay a pipeline from Alaska right through your little college town, and on the way down to bringing the oil who knows where, knock down a bunch of treesitters. So you guys *need* to figure out



ways of talking with each other.”¶ Number three, it reinforced the need to talk about race and class. At this other event, this gentleman got up and started ranting about how “we” stopped the draft; “we” stopped the draft? First of all, who the fuck is “we”? And second of all, I said “Sir, you *didn’t* stop the draft; the draft still goes on to this day.” And he goes, “What the hell are you talking about?” I said, “As long as there’s an economic draft—some people choose military service not because they want to be in the military but because they want to be in college, or because military housing is the last form of public housing that’s available—there’s a draft in this country.” The ending of the formal draft should have been celebrated as important, but it needed an economic, social, and racial justice component where people started fighting for the type of economy that doesn’t put the poorest people into military service in the first place. ¶ The fourth thing is that there’s a lot of *really* cool things going on in the country, believe it or not. I met a young woman at a bus stop who said she was part of a group of teenagers of Israeli descent and of Palestinian descent. They worked on neighborhood issues and local things together, and then once a month, had debates and meetings around what to do with the Israel/Palestine thing. That was really inspiring, because while their parents on both sides are probably like, “Don’t talk to these people,” the youth just say “Fuck it,” and lead. [laughs]

#### How did you first become an activist?

I first became an activist when a bunch of my friends and I cut school. We cut school for the sole purpose of fucking around in San Francisco. And we all had our hair shaved and looked super punk rock. We walked by the Federal Building, and there were a bunch of nuns and priests with anti-nuclear signs, having a vigil. So we walk in, and we’re like, “Hey dudes! can we hold a sign?” They were a little taken aback, but they were like, “Yeah, sure!” So because punks and priests next to each other made for a really good photo opportunity, we were broadcast on all the local news channels that night. But our cover was blown and I was suspended for three weeks. I spent those three weeks at the library, actually researching the issue we were protesting, which up to that point, I didn’t give a shit about. [laughs] ¶ When I got back to school, somebody suggested that I just form a student group, and then I



could get permission slips to go to protests. So we made this thing called Students and Teachers Against Nuclear Destruction. I got the help of this teacher named Miss Thomas, who let us use her room and stuff and the next time we went to a protest, we went as a field trip, and nobody got suspended.

#### From there, how did you end up involved in housing and gentrification issues? Why did you end up focusing on that?

I was a truck driver for Community Thrift Store, and already active as a volunteer, doing some housing rights counseling, doing a lot of squat support. I didn’t actually do the squatting, but I would show up and bring food packages and stuff. So I was driving this truck, and my partner was this Trotskyite named John, who told me about the unemployed workers’ movements of the 1930s and how folks would get un-evicted. We really thought that would be the one thing that could bring a lot of different neighborhoods together in San Francisco, around positive politics. Keep in mind that as truck drivers, we would go to one neighborhood—it was like 1992, and it was mostly landlords, telling us “Yeah, here is my ex-tenant’s stuff”—so we could see the pox of evictions starting to happen. And at the same time, I was very dissatisfied with the lack of race and class analysis that was going on in the groups I was interested in.

#### How do you classify yourself politically now?

I’M DEEPLY SUSPICIOUS OF LEFTIST SCHOLARSHIP THAT’S NOT BASED IN SOME KIND OF ACTIVISM. IT DOESN’T MEAN IT HAS TO BE THE EXACT SAME ACTIVISM—IT DOESN’T HAVE TO BE A COOKIE-CUTTER—BUT IF YOU’RE NOT INVOLVED WITH A COMMUNITY AND IF YOU’RE NOT INVOLVED WITH THE ISSUES THAT YOU’RE WRITING ABOUT, THERE’S SOMETHING MISSING.

I’m anti-authoritarian to the core, but I can’t consider myself an anarchist anymore, at least not by the standards of the present anarchist community.

#### Why?

Because I believe there are a lot of different ways to resist, and different ways to organize. I make a distinction between people who religiously adhere to civil disobedience as the only way to go—I’m not one of those—and people that see it as one part of building a healthy movement. I use the electoral process when it’s tactically sound to do so, like saving rent control. It’s really funny when a lot of people are like, “Oh, never vote; it just encourages them.” And then their own ability to stay in their homes depend on some of the results from the ballot box. That’s not to say I fetishize that—I always try to avoid the electoral process—but if you look at history, a lot of folks that started out in SNCC [the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] went on to more revolutionary standpoints, while others left liberation movements and became liberal Democrats. ¶ How resistance evolves and changes really has very little to do with your own ideologies, but what tools are available so I think because I’m tactically minded, I can’t really call myself an anarchist anymore. I think that the next left—some of the goals of the next left—are gonna be influenced by both socialist and anarchist ideas, and some new shit that we haven’t even thought of before. ©

5.8'

# DISSENT MATTERS

5.7'

BY JAMES TRACY

From the introduction to *The Civil Disobedience Handbook*:  
*A brief history and practical advice for the politically disenchanted.*

**I**N 1849, WHEN HENRY DAVID THOREAU WROTE, "That government is best which governs least," his words became a memorable part of the pre-Civil War, anti-slavery upheaval. His essays popularized the idea of civil disobedience against injustice. The Labor Movement, the Women's Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and the '60s Peace Movement used civil disobedience to force the federal government to change our laws and end the Vietnam War. Civil disobedience has recently been very effective in drawing media attention to environment issues and in the continuing recent triumphs of the worldwide anti-globalization movement.

A lot has changed in America since 1849; unfortunately much has stayed the same. Thoreau reinforced the notion that dissent was natural, rational, desirable, and even a patriotic duty. He saw civil disobedience as a form of governance in and of itself, and was deeply dubious of elections, perhaps foreseeing the 2000 Florida presidential election debacle by a century and a half.

Although the events of September 11th, 2001 have instilled an almost McCarthyite political conformity throughout this country, dissent still matters in the United States. It matters if you are a

minimum wage worker considering organizing your workplace. It matters if you are the high school student threatened with expulsion for wearing an anti-war T-shirt to school. It matters if the destruction of the Alaskan wilderness bothers you in any way. Dissent matters to the millions of people locked up in prison for non-violent offenses and a generation of youth being ushered into that system. It matters if your housing project is close to a toxic superfund site, or if your suburban house is downwind from an oil

**AND DISSENT REALLY MATTERS IF YOU DON'T LIKE YOUR PERSONAL FREEDOM AND UNALIENABLE RIGHTS TO LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS TAKEN AWAY BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.**

refinery. Dissent certainly matters if your retirement benefits have been stolen by your corporation's CEO. And dissent really matters if you don't like your personal freedom and unalienable rights to Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness taken away by the federal government.

Dissent matters if you think the War on Terrorism is starting to look like almost every other war before it. If dissent didn't matter anymore then John Ashcroft wouldn't have had to push through the USA Patriot Act that may not do much to stop terrorism, but will be used to stifle protest movements through increased surveillance and wiretap powers. The rhetoric from Washington D.C. is that every American must "fight to preserve freedom." I couldn't agree more.

As John Sellers from the Ruckus Society so aptly put it: "We need to communicate with and inspire people. We have to be vigilant to not be marginalized and inspire people in the center to join us." ©



**R** John X Piché knows zines. He started humbly, covering 1980s-era Cleveland hardcore with *No Exit*. In the early 1990s, he placed a personal ad in the pages of *Maximum Rock'n'Roll*, posing as an 18-year-old girl in search of pen pals. Two years and 174 responses later, he published *From the Diane Files*, a now-infamous zine which inspired several print runs and at least one parody. Today, John is the editor of *Uncertain Nervous Systems* and runs Love Bunni Press, an independent publishing project that he maintains to publish his own writing as well as collaborations with others.

From his very first foray into zine publishing, John has researched and cultivated a certain aesthetic content which has resonated through everything he's produced. Influenced by Surrealist painter-poet Max Ernst and post-situationist artist Jamie Reid, John has pursued a graphic style that serves to both inspire and disrupt his text. A self-professed "photographic archaeologist," some of his favorite image sources include mid-20th century magazines and children's book illustrations. The resulting collages are expressly meant to disturb and interrupt the reader's experience. In an age where many zines use sparse graphics or no graphics at all, John's zines serve as a reminder of the inextricable link between images and words—a connection inherent to zine production itself.

By day, John is a librarian in Cleveland, Ohio. He's hesitant to count himself among other canonized punk rock librarians; instead, he prefers to lionize Kinko's employees. Although he does concede that his profession gives him ample free time and easy access to research materials.

Interview by Jen Dolan

#### How did you originally discover zines?

It's a tough question . . . Tracing the complications and interweavings of aberrant discovery and subterranean exploration. The raw materials of zines manifested themselves before punk, but punk opened up the zine world to me. Ordering zines from the back of *MRR* because my favorite band was interviewed lead to subtler discoveries and networks. *Factsheet 5* was also something of a hub from which everything radiated.

#### How long were you a reader before you decided to start your own zine?

Pretty quickly. My friend, and later co-editor of

*No Exit*, Alejandro de Acosta and I had notebooks filled with silly observations, journal entries, and Ronald Reagan collages. Once we saw what was being produced, we were filled with this dual urge of complete inspiration and competition. We talked about how we would like to contribute to the Cleveland scene, document it, broadcast it. Since neither of us was musically inclined, we rode out on our strengths: writing and collage. Shortly after printing the first issue, we instinctively knew we had found our place. Trading the zine for other zines was so much more fun than just sending off well concealed cash or stamps. Trading is when the *real* correspondence and interaction began—the networks of interlacing influences, reactions, and inspirations became so elaborate and complicatedly beautiful.

#### **No Exit lasted four or five issues during the late 1980s and it covered the Cleveland scene exclusively. What made you jump from a project that was conceived as a repository for information about Cleveland hardcore to a project like *From the Diane Files*?**

A few things occurred simultaneously: Alex went away to college and became exposed to new ideas and people; our collaboration mutated as we found our own voices; and I realized that the music zine thing had run its course for me. I was interested in contributing something of substance, an artifact of meaning that *conversed* with the scene rather than *reported* on it. ¶ *Diane Files* was born from disgust; I wanted to question sexual assumptions, behavior, and courtship in the underground on its own terms. By exposing these various threads, I hoped to challenge them and provoke conversation. Plus I was reading a ton of stuff on instigation and confrontation as art and it fit nicely into the poke-in-the-eye aesthetic of Discordianism. It was immature and very asshole-like and I think at the time that was its appeal to me.

#### **Did you feel like the readers of *Diane Files* understood the political motivation behind the project, or did you feel that it was looked at as more of a novelty?**

*Diane Files* was a tremendous success on one level. The press run soared into the thousands and went through like 10 print runs. But the politics were lost in the prank, as is usually the case. I think I received one or two letters thanking me for exposing the immediate interest punk boys take in punk girls and the vulnera-

bility some girls felt in the scene. In the zine that immediately followed *Diane Files*, *GrumblePhuck*, I wrote a long, ranting tirade about how the project failed and railing against how most people wanted a sequel, which in hindsight was self-indulgent.

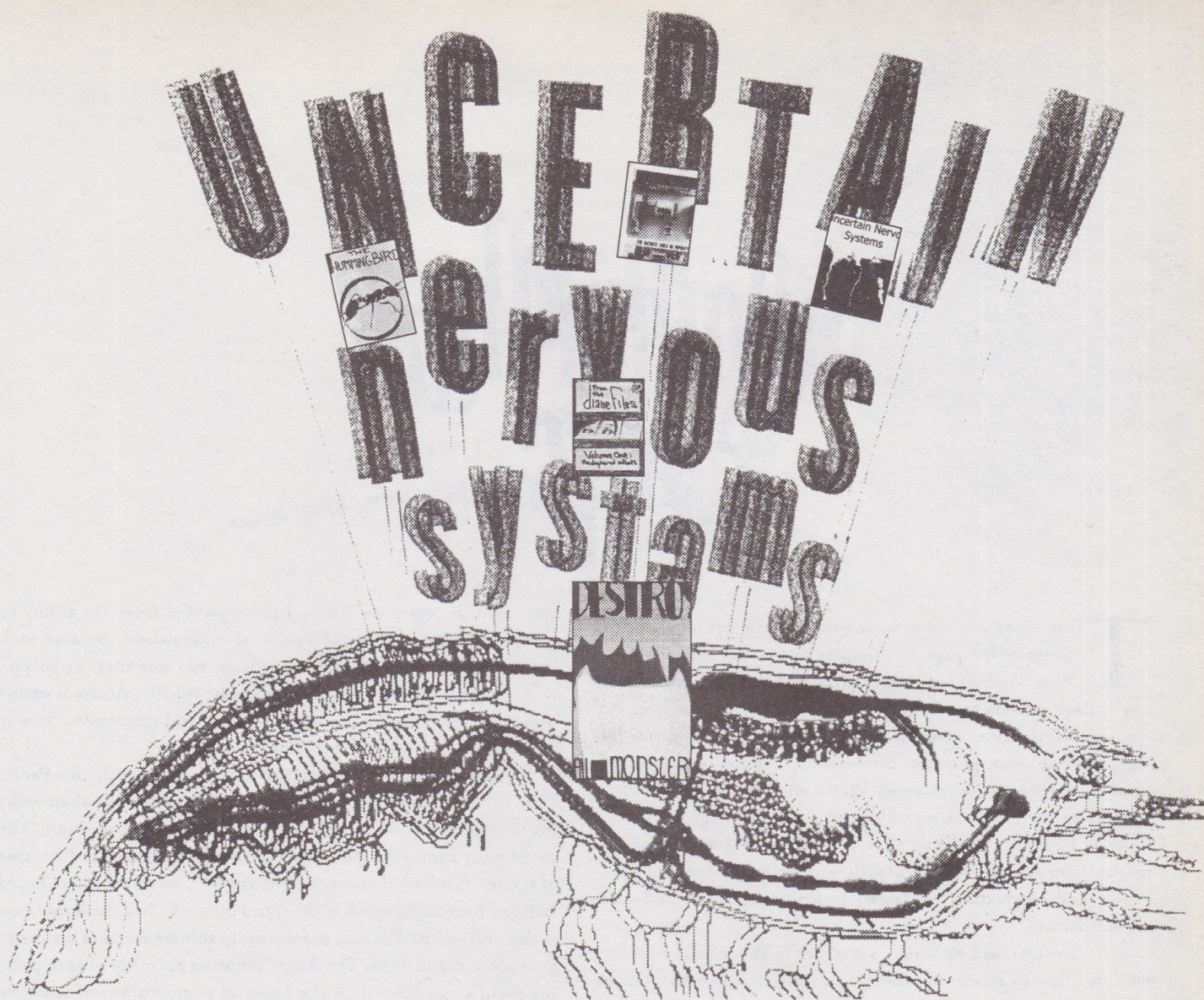
#### **Did that experience and frustration lead you to start the more overtly political *Uncertain Nervous Systems*?**

Well, *Diane Files* was a long time ago. But the experience did leave an interesting aftertaste—namely one of sensible disappointment. I felt it was so misunderstood, but this was in part a cop-out on my part because it was designed first and foremost as a prank. But also because I knew at the time that I could have continued on with it—capitalizing on its popularity—and made a name for myself. Quite frankly, that idea disgusted me. Basically, I was disappointed because its popularity and seeming demand for more was akin to an arena rock riff: big, overpowering chords that are simple variations on a theme. So the next few zines I did were consciously more aggressive, obtuse, and inaccessible. I became more fascinated with the ideas of apparent incoherent fragments, dead ends, and beginningless endings. I began to view my zines as viral contaminants—travelogues of infections and fascinations whose communication value was informed by intimacy and difficulty. I was documenting my own obsessions and stoppages, defining the limits of my aesthetic, I guess. ¶ The first issue of *Uncertain Nervous Systems* fully embodied this technique. It was wholly critical, difficult, and left much unfinished.

#### **Was it successful?**

It was a *resounding* failure, garnering horrible reviews and little undirected response. I'm sure I would've continued in this vein, but then the events of September 11th occurred. In their aftermath, I felt that the national discourse splintered, itself becoming a contagion of reaction, information, and opinion. In the face of this chaos and uncertainty, I set out to fashion a coherent narrative—a sustained commentary that turned out to be as inaccessible and trying as any fragment I ever crafted. I wanted to see if I could manage to draw out and sustain an interaction with the new political landscape and I wanted to attempt to recreate some of the cherished political spaces of my formative punk experiences. I wanted to see if it would be possible to emulate the spirit of a Crass insert or

**In the face of this chaos and uncertainty, I set out to fashion a coherent narrative—a sustained commentary that turned out to be as inaccessible and trying as any fragment I ever crafted.**



the tonal protest of Corrosion of Conformity's *Animosity* without directly reproducing them. Whether or not I achieved this convoluted goal, I can't really say, since I'm too close to the work and read it as the process of its construction, unable to see its totality.

**Why continue to work out those objectives in zine format? After all these years, why not start a website or try to find more mainstream outlets that would be interested in publishing your material?**

The simple answer is that I love it. I have a pot-head friend who told me once that one of the reasons she still smokes pot is because she loves everything about it: procuring it, rolling it, smoking it. I feel the same way about making zines: from scribbling out the notes and bits that will be the text, typing it up, hunting down

graphics, laying it out—*rubber cement*—photocopying it, addressing envelopes, handing it out . . . there is not a single aspect that does not turn me on a little. ¶ Also, I have tremendous faith in and allegiance to the medium. I really do think that beyond the communication and networking aspects of zines, they are a viable and living art form. As pretentious as that sounds, they can really be such beautiful objects. Plus, zines have given me so much—friendships, collaborations, creative stimulation—I feel obligated to continue producing them. ¶ I've toyed with the idea of a website, but I think the web is such a sham! It's a bundle of false promises and lackluster opportunities and is difficult and boring to navigate. I feel the web, more so than even TV, was sold to us as a society with such lofty promises and was even more quickly subsumed by huge media conglomerates, that any and all

potential has been lost. The Internet is interactive consumerism first and foremost now and I find that to be immediately tedious. Plus, there is something intrinsic about a tactile object; something that can't be replicated on a screen. The web also includes this mediation of speed and trivia, not of contemplation or substance. The communication is different, the tone is shriller—*trendier*, if you will pardon a phrase. ¶ As for larger or mainstream press, well, unlike the current push toward success and wider audiences that has swept the underground recording industry, I actually prefer smaller audiences. The intimacy is attractive to me. I would like to think that with the zines I produce, I am inviting dialogue and correspondence. Idealist, I know, but it is one of the major reasons why I continue to publish in the underground. ©

# INFORMATION PANIC

by R. John X. Piche  
from *Uncertain Nervous Systems: Ant-Tracks*

TEN YEARS AGO NOW, some comrades-in-print produced a series of 12 page mini-tracts under the title *Information Panic*. Dealing with vague ideas stripped from post-modern college readers and mined from the midnight ramblings of insomniacs, the zines attacked the desire to produce with surprisingly diverse and effective productions. Sometimes political, sometimes aesthetic, always smelling like offset ink, these zines were a staple in my personal mythology of a zine underground and a beam of hope that maybe we all were really onto something. That maybe there was a movement of artist and writers whose communication and interaction generated something positive and—dare say—important.

But tonight, as I sit here, I am struck by the volume of information I have in relation to the scant connection I've maintained. Electric media has overwhelmed any movement I ever participated in or that recognized me as a coherent member. I have a great deal more access to the timeliness of articles, unfolding events, and other people's informed—sometimes even academic—opinions, but something essential is lacking.

That something lacking is the time or energy to process, digest, or formulate any sort of idea about the information that floods my nervous system. Gone are the ornately decorated letters detailing the studies of some angry subversive.

Lost is the tactile smear of catalogs and newsprint hyperactivity listing in the smallest legible type the existence of books and music I had only heard rumors of whispered from the backs of out-of-town tour vans. Gone is the time to wade through, then field report on, volumes of dense history or speculative muckraking. Gone are the packages, stuffed to envelope-exploding capacity, of photocopied rants, cut and paste manifesto's, or declassified documents collected by other molemen of the revolution.

Instead what I have are hot links to long, blinking articles culled from national dailies. Webmaster addresses to report 404 error problems. Graphics that do not print and pop up windows

that crash the machine. Today I am separated from the ability to collate and think about the wealth of information, because each shard begs me to enter into past articles, sponsor sites, or corporate commercials for the new Tom Cruise vehicle. Access is extraordinary. The information labyrinth, vast and impressive. So why do I feel I know now less than I did then?

Because Information has finally caught up with the Panic. Here I speak of the commercialized panic that one feels when walking through the malls or aisles of some collectors convention. The commodity panic of acquisition—that of being the first in line; one of the few that have that rare purple vinyl 7"; or actually have heard William Burroughs speak at the 92nd Street Y. It is panic of trivia gossip and access. The one ups-manship volume matches that masquerade as discussions. The finger pointing currency of each passing event's authority. It is the panic of competition, of knowing more accurate and timely facts to bandy about in ironic displays of coffee-clutch intellectualism. It is the panic of interruption and exaggeration. It is a panic without style or synthesis. It is, simply put, INFORMATION PANIC. The filters of postage marks and authority of hearsay have been replaced with the speed of downloads and memorizing passwords. The critical ability has been downed in the shower of soundbites and streaming audio. There is no longer an underground perspective in thoughtful opposition. There are no longer the wild-haired isolated madmen churning out fevered pleas and compassionate tracts. We have lost our ability to contact one another on an intimate, lucid, and critical timetable. We are subject to images and machines and we have failed to slow them down. So this war renders me mute, unable to draw myself out of the petty grievances and overwrought interviews. I am frustrated that I seem to be alone again with nothing to console me but a deluge of Panicked Information that I can no longer put to good use. *Uncertain Nervous Systems* attempts to slow it all down again. Re-establish ties. Open trap doors and hang out in the cob-web basements that I grew up in. ©

**That something lacking is the time or energy to process, digest, or formulate any sort of idea about the information that floods my nervous system.**

the underground speaks for itself:



Black Flag  
Kathleen Hanna  
Noam Chomsky  
Sleater-Kinney  
Thurston Moore  
Jello Biafra  
Frank Kozik  
Ian MacKaye  
Steve Albini  
Ruckus Society  
Winston Smith  
Porcell  
Jody Bleyle  
Mordam Records  
Los Crudos  
Negativland  
Matt Wobensmith  
Chumbawamba  
Central Ohio Abortion  
Access Fund  
Art Chantry  
Ted Leo  
Jem Cohen  
Voices in the  
Wilderness  
Duncan Barlow  
Jon Strange



# WE OWE YOU NOTHING

## punk planet: the collected interviews

now in it's third printing at finer bookstores and record stores everywhere or direct from [www.punkplanet.com](http://www.punkplanet.com)

## outdoor ad creep



Carrie McLaren is best known as editor and publisher of *Stay Free* a literate and funny zine that critiques the media and consumer culture that permeates modern American life. Having transformed itself from its early days as a personal feminism-inspired zine, 20 issues later, *Stay Free* is now a leading voice in the culture jamming/anti-corporate movement most often associated with *Adbusters* magazine.

But instead of taking the too-slick, slightly smarmy approach that permeates *Adbusters*, *Stay Free* stays closer to its DIY zine upbringing. Any given issue of the magazine casts a wide net, reeling in words, pictures, and sounds on education, music, media activism, freedom of expression, kids and markets, the battle for public, ad-free spaces, and much more. The writing is approachable (even the academics speak English for a change), the layouts welcomingly low-res (while still being clean), and the whole thing has a tone of we're-all-in-this-together that's refreshing. McLaren's also a teacher, curator (catch her Illegal Art exhibit online at [www.illegal-art.org](http://www.illegal-art.org)), and activist operating out of the fourth-largest city in the US, Brooklyn, New York.

Introduction by **Rick Prelinger** with Daniel Sinker  
Interview by **Rick Prelinger**

### How would you describe *Stay Free*?

I typically say it's an independent magazine about media and culture. But, when it started, it wasn't like I had much of a mission. It was

less about giving people what they want, and more about "I have this creative impulse, and this is what I need to do—even if nobody reads it." [laughs]

### So you began as a classic zinemaker?

Right. This was in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and it was a way of channeling my energies outside of the college radio station where I was working. I've always loved learning and reading, and it was a way to organize my thinking. Whenever I read a good book, I often want to talk back to the author, or discuss it with a friend. I think that's what *Stay Free* was, and remains—a way to raise ideas and talk back and maybe take things in a new direction.

**Your perspective is that of a person who wants to change the world, and it seems that you've articulated that in your own way. You're self-taught in many ways. Was that also like what making a zine was about, consciousness-raising for yourself?**

At first, it was more in a feminist vein. The radio station was very male, and so was the record store where I worked, and it was a way for me to articulate ideas about gender that I never learned in school, and actually never got in any formal setting. I didn't even think about whether I was an activist.

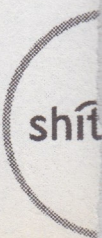
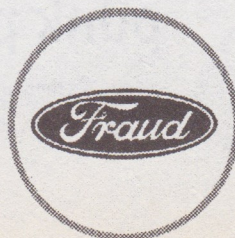
**So then you came to New York and started working in the music industry. So what happened to the magazine?**

The plan was to stop doing *Stay Free*. I was

hired to do advertising, a totally uncreative job, at Matador Records, and started a newsletter called *Escandalo*. It was well-received—people at Matador were supportive—but after a while I really missed doing *Stay Free*. With *Stay Free*, I didn't have a boss, I didn't have to sell records, I didn't have to do it for any purpose at all. So I started it back up. Earlier, it had been much more of a local community paper, and in New York it wasn't going to be the same thing. New York's a totally different place. I was a small fish in a very big pond. [laughs] ¶ I wanted to shift the focus to advertising and marketing, because that's what I was increasingly interested in. I had read a book called *Out of the Garden: Toys and Children's Culture in the Age of Marketing*, by Stephen Kline. It was about how the characters marketed to kids affect their play. I really loved it and wanted to talk to the author and ask some questions. But the only way to do that was to do an interview. So I thought, "I'll start *Stay Free*! back up." That's sort of what got me going. We did a whole issue on marketing to kids.

**That was the first issue I read. I saw it on the newsstands, and I thought, "Who is this Carrie McLaren?" I'd seen tons of people write about the media, and it's usually very doctrinaire. Very few of them really have the courage to be playful and be questioning, I liked that approach. I also liked that it was a zine and not slick or glossy.**

Well, some people say that it's *really* slick and glossy. Some zinesters won't have anything to do with it. When I went to a zine fair in





COPYRIGHT ISSUE

\$3.95 U.S. (thank you very much)



# STAY FREE!

Portland, people were like, "Oh . . ."

**Really? What did they think it was?**

They think it's a big magazine, that it's not a zine.

**Because it has covers and it's not done at Kinkos?**

Well, it has a color cover. From the outside it does look more like a magazine. And it's come to the point now where a lot of the people who contribute, in one way or another, are professionals in media industries. People can't find a commercial outlet for certain ideas, so sometimes they'll bring them to *Stay Free*. But most of the articles are instigated by myself and my partner Alexandra Ringe. We do most of the writing. It's become much more of a partnership than it was early on. Early on, I did it all, and there was very little copyediting.

**The landscape of the media right now is chaotic, and bewildering to me—I'm not just talking about conventional corporate media, but alternative media, too. Every day there's a hundred different things that come over the computer, or pick up in the cafe, or see in the paper. How do you try to be different?**

One of my heroes is Leslie Saven, who wrote a column about advertising in the *Village Voice*. One thing that I think made her writing so powerful is that she didn't give away too much, she didn't give away too many of her own feelings. It was possible for someone who didn't agree with her to read along, and maybe subtly be changed by her writing. She *hates* advertising. She *abhors*

it. But at the same time, she'll write things like, "I was buying something from the Home Shopping Channel and . . ." She's not above everybody else, she's in this world and trying to make sense of it. It's not that sort of dogmatic type of writing that you can see in a lot of leftist publications. ¶ With the essays and interviews in *Stay Free*, we avoid telling people what to think. We try to maintain a sort of contemplative, nuanced tone. But parts of the magazine are pretty in your face; it's very clear where we're coming from with certain projects. When you want to reach a certain goal, whether it's getting advertising out of schools or fighting SUVs, in some ways it's better to just fuck nuance, fuck complexity, ignore all the contrary arguments and just go. Otherwise you can sit there all day and debate things. We don't just want to critique the culture, but actually get out and be active.

**Your most recent issue is a theme issue about copyright. How did that come about?**

Well, I first became educated about copyright when Negativland got sued 10 years ago for their U2 EP. I wrote about it and started keeping in contact with Mark Hosler, who's in the band. Then early in 2002, Brewster Kahle approached *Stay Free* about organizing an art exhibit focused on copyright and trademark. So for that, I collected examples of artists who have run into legal problems—or who *could* run into legal problems—due to their use of other's intellectual property. We called the exhibit *Illegal Art* and had a show here in New York. Now it's moved it to Chicago and San

Francisco. The point is not only to address the impact that copyright law is having on artists, but the impact it's having on everyday people and their access to cultural materials. There is currently legislation, for example, that dictates how you can use your DVDs and your computer—what's acceptable and what's not.

**You interview scholars like Stuart Ewen, Sut Jhally, and James Twitchell and try to get them to express themselves clearly for a broader audience. Hardly anybody does that.**

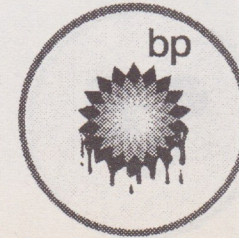
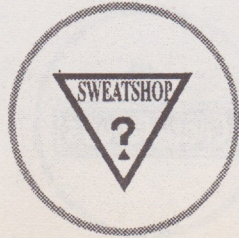
I think a lot of scholars have really interesting ideas, but no one's ever going to read their work because it's so impenetrable. I can't get past page three sometimes without wanting to take a nap.

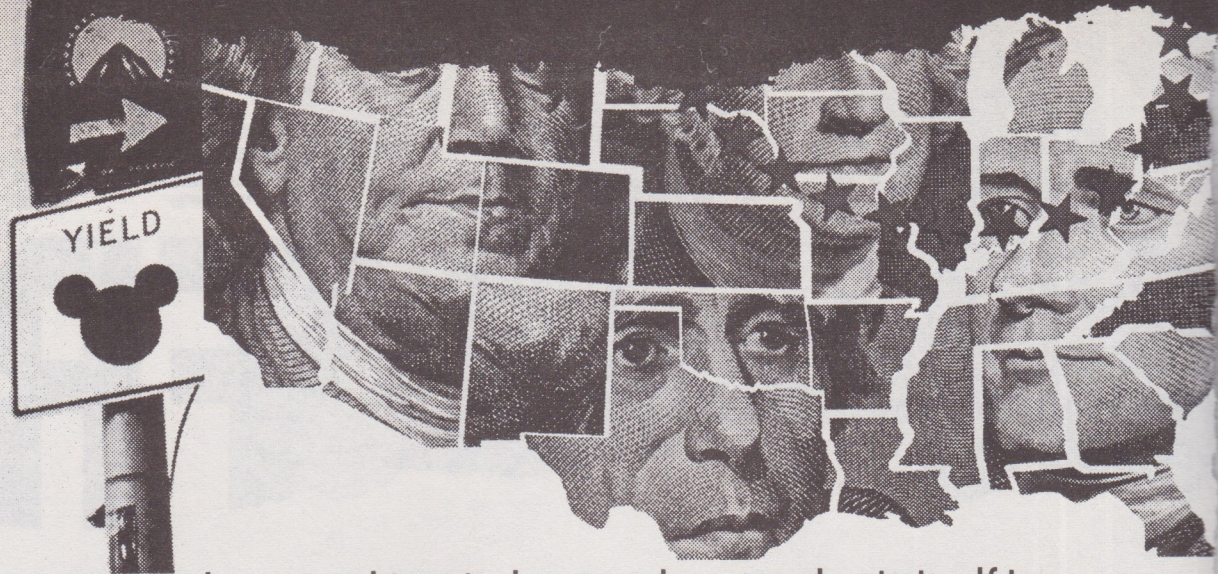
**You're a punchy writer, too. *Stay Free* has always managed to be much more readable than most media critiques.**

If I had to choose an audience, it would be people who like to learn and read and think, but don't like a lot of the bullshit they had to put up with in school. I definitely steer more towards avoiding jargon and unnecessarily complicated language. I think you can do theory and convey complex ideas without having to resort to that type of language. You can do it through metaphors and similes.

**You've become a major collector of old books and magazines relating to advertising and public relations and marketing, and your house has become like mine, filled with old books. We live**

ank





## With *Stay Free*, we try to put things in a historical context because that in itself is an alternative to a consumer culture that is so future-focused and so decontextualized.

in a really ahistorical period where people are nostalgic and people are collectors, but they don't like to think about history. What do you want to do with history? How do you want to mobilize it? What's it to you?

I like using history to put things in context. One of the things that got me going were all these things people were saying about "my generation" or "Generation X": "They're so media-savvy, so cynical about the media, so skeptical about the media, they can't be fooled." I wanted to find out what that was about. ¶ It wasn't that one day I woke up and said "I want to do history." I wanted to know how people my age respond to advertising, and I wanted to find out what previous generations had said. The only way to really investigate that issue was to look at old advertising texts and consumer magazines. I started reading analyses of consumers back in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s—examples of what people thought about advertising and how they responded to it. Looking at popular magazines and seeing just what the image of advertising was back then—it's sort of like doing detective work, you're figuring things out. It's *fun*. ¶ With *Stay Free*, we try to put things in a historical context because that in itself is an alternative to a consumer culture that is so future-focused and so decontextualized. People say, "Man, what's the point of criticizing advertising and marketing?

What alternative is there?" I think one thing we can do is try to look for some historical understanding and try to put things into some sort of context. Not just historical context, but also social and cultural. Everything is connected.

**It seems that both with your teaching and with *Stay Free* that you tend to be pretty critical of the way media literacy is taught. What's your take on it?**

One of its overriding assumptions is that by getting kids to watch and think about the media all the time, it's somehow going to immunize them against media influence. I'm a media educator myself, so it's not that I think that teaching about media is a bad thing—nothing could be *further* from the truth. But what happens is students end up watching lots of mass media in school. This isn't such a problem when the teacher is really sharp and when she's got a solid curriculum, but more often you'll have teachers just showing mainstream Hollywood movies in class, and then maybe talking about the camera angles or the editing. It's not *fundamental* criticism; it doesn't go very deeply, and it doesn't put the movies in any kind of political or social context. Then what happens is it opens the door for Time Warner and the Discovery Channel and Channel One to start producing media literacy curricula for kids to study their movies and TV shows. These are actually being used in a lot of schools right now.

*The New York Times* and the *Washington Post* and other major media outlets are producing media literacy curricula because they want kids to be looking and studying and watching *their* media. ¶ Another thing about mainstream media literacy is it encourages kids to think that once they learn certain media techniques, they're not going to be influenced by media. I mean, kids *already* think they are too savvy, too cynical, and too smart to be fooled, manipulated, or influenced in any way—most adults do, too. Everybody thinks that *other* people are influenced, but that they aren't influenced themselves. So in my class, I try to teach my students the various ways they are and will *continue* to be influenced, no matter how smart they think they are. It's almost the opposite approach that most teachers use. ¶ A lot of media literacy starts with a bogus premise—the idea that you should sit and think critically about every single thing you see or read. It flies in the face of how and why people actually use media. People watch television to relax. They watch it because they've had a hard day at work and need to zone out. If we had to analyze and think critically about every single ad we saw and every single TV show we watched, our brains would explode! We wouldn't have any time to think about anything else. And it's OK, you know, to just sit and be entertained. I like to be entertained, I watch a lot of base crap too, you know! ©



# As advertisers race to cover every available surface, are they **DRIVING US INSANE?**

By Carrie McLaren  
From *Stay Free* #18

**I**T'S JULY 12, 2000. A rocket bearing Pizza Hut's logo launches into space. And that evening, on NBC's *Nightly News*, a wide-eyed advertising exec is telling the nation about an exciting new ad medium. Not the ad stickers on bananas (so 1996). Not the slogans imprinted on beach sands (ditto). Not the cell phone pitches on tabletops, or the sailing billboard, or the Volkswagon "autowraps," which can turn your everyday car into an advertising vehicle. No, she's talking about—get this!—elevator commercials. That's television in the elevator! There'll be no more agonizing wait on the lift to the office. "People actually miss their floors," enthuses the rep. "They get so engrossed in the story!"

Chances are, however, that the people she's referring are advertisers and their clients. Most humans, even those who loved the Chihauhau, are markedly less thrilled about the prospect of yet another new ad medium. People approach these ads in one of two ways: either by ignoring them, or making a game of it by trying to figure out what could possibly be next. Ads on toilets? Gas pumps? Rooftops? The vertical edges of stair steps? Considering ads already adorn all the above, it is essentially a game of no contest. Perhaps the only real challenge would be to find spaces *without* advertising. Credit cards, ATM receipts, sports stadiums, hotel keys, even the bottom of the each hole on the golf course—no space is left unscathed.

Naturally, advertisers aren't limited by physical surfaces (or lack thereof). Broadcast Team in Ormond Beach, Florida, specializes in telemarketing geared to answering machines. The company hires celebrities to record a pitch—Dick Clark for American Music Awards; Michael Bolton for his new album—which is then left as a "personal" message: "Hi, this is Dick Clark. I'm sorry to reach you at home, but I just wanted to call your attention to a television special . . ."

Nor are advertisers constrained by laws. "Street blimps" (large, flat, billboards-on-wheels) drive around cities such as Manhattan, despite ordinances banning them. Companies spray-paint ads on sidewalks and streetposts and indulge in equally illegal "wild posting." The fines paid by transgressors—usually a fraction of what legit advertising costs—are prefigured into the budget. Last year, Reebok painted over 200 "mini-billboards" on sidewalks in

downtown Manhattan. The company was required to pay only \$11,000 in cleanup costs. By comparison, advertising on 200 phone booths during that period would have cost over \$400,000.

The catch-all trade term for such new new advertising is "ambient," or, as the British call it, the "pavement and urinals" category. Although it has been around for decades, the category has exploded in recent years. And this year is expected to be the biggest yet, with promises of canned fragrances (Digicents' "Snortal," touted as "the world's first scent-enabled Web portal") and Radio Shack's sponsorship of a robot on the moon.

Advertisers cite several reasons for the explosion of ambient. Soaring network television rates coupled with declining audiences (particularly Generations X and Y) and increased competition from Internet and cable outlets have made it difficult to blanket a brand message like the old days. A booming economy fueled with dot-com money added to the ad glut. And the desire to microtarget people at precisely timed moments all make ambient the "it" form.

What these explanations miss, however, is that the forces behind ambient are inherent in the advertising process. Advertising works somewhat like bacteria: After its hosts (consumers) are exposed, they become immune, so new strains of ads must develop and grow. These new strains are quickly copied, adding clutter, and requiring new strains to emerge. Over time, advertising clutter leads to diminishing returns for individual campaigns. The more advertising grows, the more it *must* grow. The cycle accelerates and what was formerly considered unethical, offensive, or gauche is gradually mainstreamed out of necessity.

Take bathrooms for example. When Zoom Media, a company that places advertising in restaurant and club bathrooms, launched 10 years ago, the category faced "the toilet syndrome"—no company wanted to promote its brand near the crapper. The promise of reaching a captive, targeted audience eventually made converts, though. While Zoom's revenues in 1991 totaled \$40,000, that figure grew to \$12 million in 1999. Perhaps the most significant growth, however, is the form the ads take. Initially limited to posters on stall doors and walls, bathroom advertising has gone hi-

**Tiresblown**

income  
**GAP**

**Mob**

Microsoft  
**Monopoly xp**

**MTV**  
MONEY TELEVISION

# In the same way that advertising determines what people will or won't see on the news, ambient advertisers aim to control what they will or won't see outside, at work, or wherever

tech with CD-ROMs and audio. The content of these ads has likewise become more, uh, ambitious. A new ABC-TV campaign speaks to men through the urinal, telling jokes like: "Oh my God, look at the size of that thing!" and "Hey, watch your shoes!" A recent men's room campaign for Kozmo advises, "That girl's a bitch. Why don't you go home and rent a movie?"

Similarly, ads have spread to territories formerly kept in check by some vestige of ethics: school buses and textbooks, historical monuments, doctor's offices, even whole cities. Sacramento, California, calls its corporate sponsorship plan "Capital Spirit." In Manhattan, trees along 23rd Street are adorned with Old Navy logos. It's no surprise, then, that "ambient" advertising is also known as "ad creep," a word that single-handedly suggests both advertising's growth and its creators. And though the term, like ambient, is new, its roots run deep.

In 1759, Samuel Johnson wrote in *The Idler* that "Advertisements are now so numerous that they are very negligently perused." This was over a century before anything that could be considered an advertising industry existed, but almost as soon as it did (by the 1910s and '20s) ad men warned of "saturation" or what is now called "clutter." The key difference between then and now is that, formerly, the media used by advertising—newspapers, radio, television—were commonly understood to be public goods. Ad men felt obligated (if only out of legal concerns) to keep public interests in mind. The new breed of ad "creatives" are not nearly so encumbered, giddily promoting their ability to reach a "captive audience" with "forced media."

Incidentally, said selling point also happens to be one of main problems, as critics see it: people can't get away from this stuff. In April 2000, Gary Ruskin, director of Commercial Alert, sent a letter to ad agencies inquiring: "Do you recognize any place to be off-limits to advertising? In your view, where should your industry draw the line?" He received no response. Advertisers have the freedom to advertise, apparently, but you aren't free to avoid it.

Not that you would want to. To hear the marketers tell it, advertising is a gift, relieving you of the agony of a reflective moment, like that 15 seconds of waiting for your cash at the ATM. The Outdoor Advertising Association of America calls billboards the "art gallery of the roadways and the theater of the streets." (The same organization once published a study showing that billboards improve safety by preventing driver "mild disorientation" and "excessive fantasy formation.")

Advertisers insist the response to ambient ads is "tremendous" (Zoom Media), "overwhelmingly positive" (beachnbillboard.com), that ambient ads are "hot and chic . . . cool and hip" (Starcom Worldwide), and that criticisms are minimal: a few grumpy ATM customers here and there. At the same time, they recognize that ad fatigue is real. People are said to see upwards of 3,000 ads a day, and tuning out most of them is necessary to stay functional. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that following a Coca-Cola-sponsored rac-

ing event that was littered with Coke signs, giant inflatable Coke bottles, and a Coke logo covering the middle of the race track, only one-third of the attendees could name Coke as the sponsor.

Advertising is, to some extent, a victim of its own success. And to maintain the same level of success, it evades public criticism by rendering that criticism moot—by blanketing the environment so that there is no escape. In so doing, ambient's biggest impact may, ironically, be the most invisible. In the same way that advertising determines what people will or won't see on the news, ambient advertisers aim to control what they will or won't see outside, at work, or wherever.

Far from shying away from this dystopic vision, corporations embrace it. Compac chose ATMs and elevators for its recent "Non Stop" ad campaign because, according to one spokesman, "We wanted to send a message that we're everywhere, that we're unstoppable."

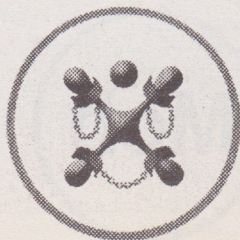
A guerrilla campaign for CFRB, a Toronto talk radio station, was even more direct. CFRB's ad agency Roche Macaulay & Partners Advertising told *Strategy*, "We wanted [the campaign] to become part of the cityscape—a universal thing like homelessness and crime that everyone has an opinion about." So Roche Macaulay blanketed Toronto with signs bearing such questions as: "How far away do you think the nearest crack house is?" and "Could you live on this street corner for a week?" After at least one billboard drew angry calls from residents, Roche Macaulay cheered. Apparently, when people complain, it shows they're awake and consciously viewing the brand.

Even better than merely saturating the environment is getting people to interact with it. Floorgraphics, a company that places "adhesive billboards" on grocery store floors, designed a "Got Milk?" ad to look like a puddle of spilt milk, complete with an actual milk carton lying on its side. Unwitting supermarket shoppers would hunt down store employees to point out the "hazard."

Such tactics may seem innocuous (even funny) as isolated incidents; the problems are only apparent when ads are multiplied by thousands and constantly force-fed to the public.

"There's a negative correlation between all that advertising hoopla and interesting ideas we can create ourselves," says longtime *Village Voice* ad columnist Leslie Savan. Incessant advertising, she adds, "drains us and depresses our ability to think that life can be fun and interesting outside of what corporate culture brings. It's as if the color has drained out of our brains onto the signs on the floor."

With this in mind, maybe the future of advertising calls for a new game. As Savan suggests, our minds and spirits are the ultimate media for sale. Left unchecked, ad glut will only worsen, and any downtime people have in between absorbing media messages will be defined as waste. Thus, rather than measuring ad growth by fruit stickers and gas pumps, we should start looking at IQ points and pulse rates. Once every conceivable surface has been taken, advertising's growth can come only at the expense of our own. ©



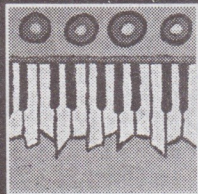
# SADDLE CREEK

NEW RELEASES

**Sorry About Dresden**  
Let It Rest  
(LBJ-52)  
CD \$11



**Cursive**  
The Ugly Organ  
(LBJ-51)  
CD/LP \$11/\$9



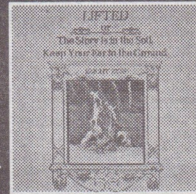
**Various Artists**  
50  
(LBJ-50)  
2xCD \$10 LP \$9



**Rilo Kiley**  
The Execution of All Things  
(LBJ-47)  
CD/LP \$11/\$9



**Bright Eyes**  
LIFTED or The Story is in  
the Soil; Keep Your Ear to  
the Ground (LBJ-46)  
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\* A two disc sampler featuring one previously released track as well as one new and exclusive track from Azure Ray, Bright Eyes, Cursive, Desaparecidos, The Faint, The Good Life, Mayday, Now It's Overhead, Rilo Kiley, Son Ambulance and Sorry About Dresden. 22 Songs on the CD / 11 Songs on the LP

Note: Vinyl version only has the 11 new songs - it does not contain the 11 previously released tracks.

# Punk Rock Times

Your monthly source for new punk rock releases NO. 36 April 2003

Who? Perhaps you will never know. Maybe the

Today in Van Nuys, two men descend

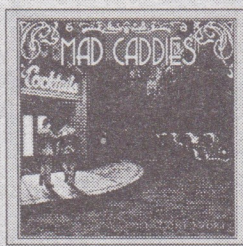
midst no one at the scene cared to comment perhaps fearing the consequences of



## AFI

*The Art of Drowning*

Latest AFI News: US Tour starting April, headlining Warped Tour, new Deathworks release out now! Nitro / 15835 Out Now!



## Mad Caddies

*Just One More*

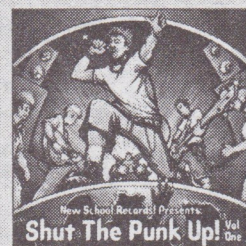
These sons of Santa Barbara are back with 15 new reggie, discolored, and ska influenced Punk Rock songs. Fat Wreck Chords / FAT 648 Out Now!



## Mensen

*Oslo City*

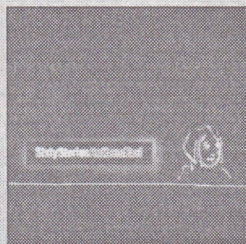
Thirteen hard-rockin' tracks from our favorite Newswagon jabs. Produced by Nickie Hellcat. Gearhead / RPM035 Out 4/6/03



## Shut The Punk Up!

*Volume One*

MIST OWN COMPLICATION... Link 99, Midtown, Falling Sickies, Nobody's, and more! More info: [www.newschoolrecords.com](http://www.newschoolrecords.com) New School Records / NSR105-CD Out Now!



## Sixty Stories

*Anthem Red*

Somewhere between the riot girl umph of Bikini Kill and the simple, driving melodic pop of Weezer. Smashbox (via Hopeless Dist.) / HDS010 Out Now!



## Snuff

*Disposable Income*

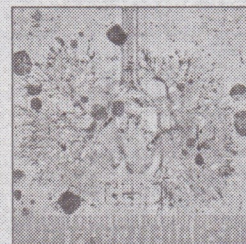
The killer new full-length from UK Punk heavy weights Snuff. The Union Label Group / UNION021CD Out Now!



## Stairwell

*The Sounds of Change*

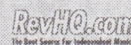
Quite simply, the ten-track Sounds Of Change is indie-pop rock in its finest form. Hopeless Records / HR667 Out Now!



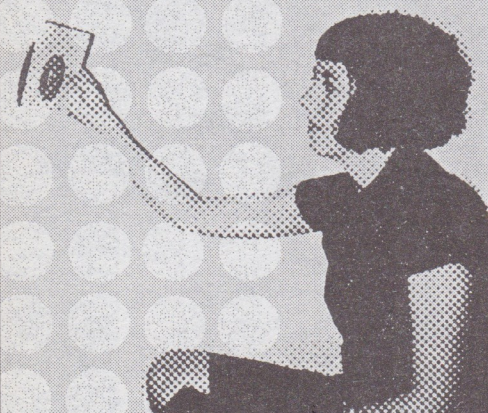
## Thirty Called Arson

*You're Only a Rebel from the Waist Downward*

Incredible debut! Pushing Metalcore violence check full of technical assaults and dizzying tempo changes. Pluto Records (via REV HQ) / PLU016 Out Now!



SATURDAY LOOKS GOOD TO ME  
ALL YOUR SUMMER SONGS



## Saturday Looks Good to Me "All Your Summer Songs"

"Specifically placed string sections, horns, bells and strange percussion sounds reflect off of warm soul rhythms or electrifying pop songs, overflowing with claustrophobic melodies and an unmistakable AM radio vibe."

CD/LP March 18

THE  
RED HOT  
VALENTINES



Steno  
Pad

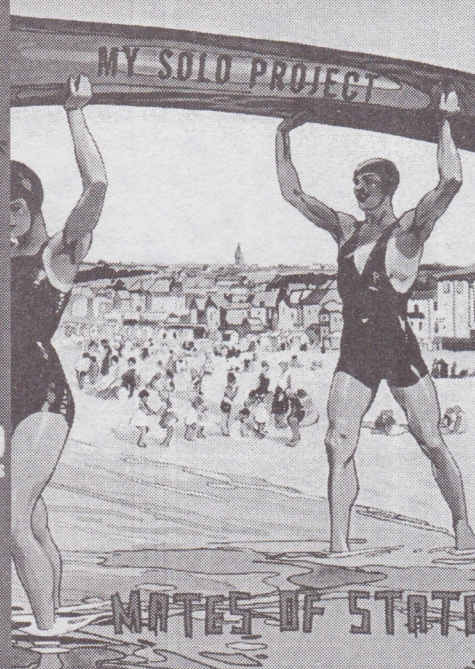
6" x 9"

100  
Sheets

## The Red Hot Valentines "Summer Fling"

"...Moog-induced power pop with three-part harmonies and songs so catchy they should be illegal." - AP

CD May 20



## Mates of State "My Solo Project"

Debut album, now available from Polyvinyl!  
"Mates of State crank out a giant, joyous pop sound that needs no overdubbing or ornamentation to convey its exuberance...rejuvenating indie pop with unbelievable vigor." - AMG

CD April 15

# RISE AGAINST



**CD/LP OUT NOW | REVOLUTIONS PER MINUTE**



Fat Wreck Chords P.O. Box 193690 San Francisco, CA 94119  
www.fatwreck.com www.riseagainst.com

## Style Wars

plexifilm



### 006 Style Wars / Tony Silver

The legendary 1983 documentary on New York's king's of graffiti and the birth of hip hop. 20th anniversary 2-disc DVD release with over 3 1/2 hours of extras including outtakes, artist galleries, over 200 original trains, and new interviews with the filmmakers, artists and guests including Fab Five Freddy, DJ Red Alert, Goldie and more. "If you want to know what hip hop is really all about, see a film called Style Wars." - KRS-1



### 005 Friends Forever / Ben Wolfensohn

A true documentary about a totally fucking insane band that you will never see play in a club. Friends Forever play inside their van in the parking lot to stunned audiences. No crowd is too small or too baffled when you're on a smoke-spewing generator-driven "mission to save rock." DVD special features include a magic show, a puke party, explosions, and some dangerous costumes. "Embodies the cutting edge of the music documentary form." - L.A. Times

## FRIENDS FOREVER

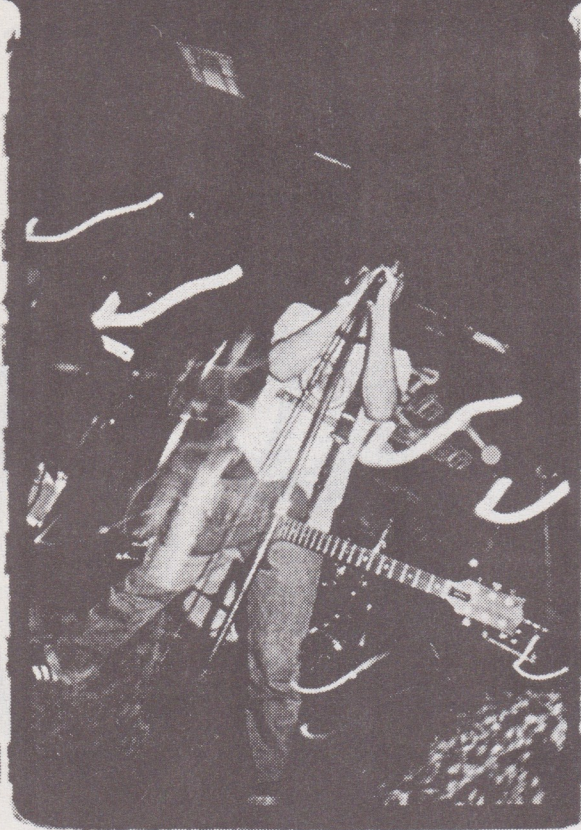
A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY BEN WOLFENSOHN

"WE BOOKED OUR FIRST SHOW AND THEN THEY SAID WE COULDN'T PLAY. SO WE PLAYED IN OUR VAN. IT JUST SEEMED RIGHT; WE HAD TO ROCK IN THE VAN."

plexifilm.com

DVD

# BULLET TRAIN TO VEGAS



"Profile This" EP  
OUT NOW on  
Letterbomb  
Recordings

For MP3's and  
tour dates go to  
[www.bullettrain  
tovegas.com](http://www.bullettrain<br/>tovegas.com)

For EP send \$5 to:  
21661 Brookhurst St  
#125  
Huntington Beach  
CA 92646



**PROJECT:  
PORKCHOP**

[www.projectporkchop.com](http://www.projectporkchop.com)

Fairy Talz

thoughts of a fairy lost & alone in  
a world she does not understand

a set of twelve hand written  
& decorated poetry cards

no two sets alike

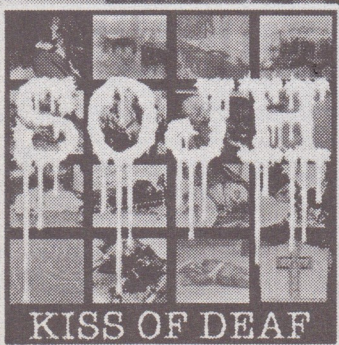
send \$4 (NM res add 6.2% tax) to:  
Empty Shadow Creations  
Attn: F.T.  
PO Box 2448  
Corrales NM 87048

Omaha is rife with profound and poignant music.

SOJH doesn't know what those words mean.

## Straight Outta Junior High

Stupid music that is neither profound, poignant, nor rife, but  
it will rock your balls off.



Straight Outta Junior High - "Kiss of Deaf"  
\$10 Postage paid within the U.S. to:  
SOJH @ P.O. Box 84841, Lincoln, NE 68501  
[www.sojh.com](http://www.sojh.com) and [www.interpunk.com](http://www.interpunk.com)

Seeking  
Submissions



[www.diceybrown.com](http://www.diceybrown.com)

Poetry, Fiction, Photography

## 12 Simple Vegan Recipes

send \$3 to:

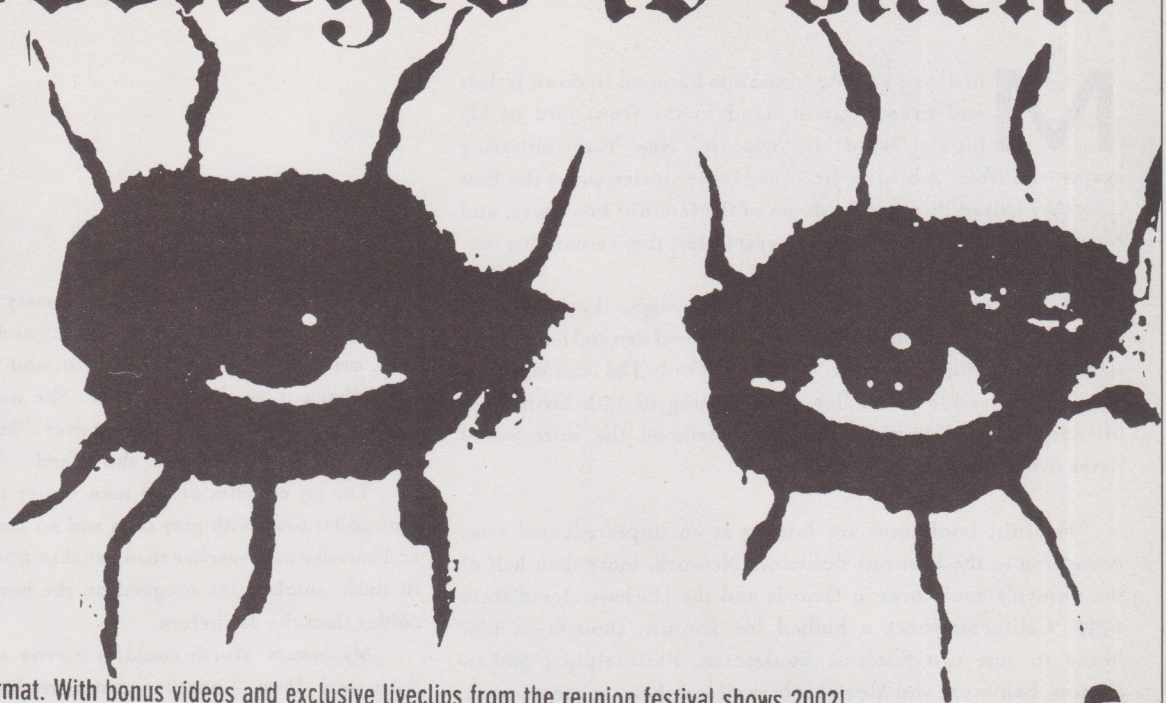
**Maine Newsclip**  
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Kingfield, ME 04947

# Turbonegro is back!

ASS COBRA CD



APOCALYPSE DUDES CD



Re-released in digipak format. With bonus videos and exclusive liveclips from the reunion festival shows 2002!  
The new album "Scandinavian Leather" comes out on May 6th, 2003

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# neva dinova

self-titled debut CD out now



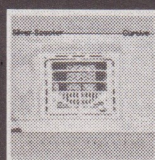
also available:

**CURSIVE**

"Such Blinding Stars  
For Starving Eyes" CD



**CURSIVE /  
SILVER SCOOTER**  
split CDep



**JIMMY EAT WORLD  
MINERAL / SENSE FIELD**  
split 7 inch



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More than a dozen onlookers bundled in down jackets and fleece mittens stand in the front yard of My Sisters' Words in Syracuse, New York, shivering against the frosty morning air. They trade stories about the first time they walked through the doors of the feminist bookstore, and how they can hardly believe that 15 years later, they're standing witness to this.

With a broad grin, Mary Ellen Kavanaugh, the bookstore's founder and owner, removes the store's weathered sign and hoists a new sign onto the railing that reads: My Sisters' Words/The Next Wave.

The venerable bookseller is celebrating its 15th birthday; a birthday some, Kavanaugh included, believed the store would never live to see.

Feminist bookstores are folding at an unprecedented rate. According to the Feminist Bookstore Network, more than half of the women's bookstores in Canada and the US have closed since 1997. California—once a hotbed for feminist thought—is now home to just two feminist bookstores. Philadelphia, Dallas, Boston, Baltimore and Memphis have all lost theirs in recent years. The *Feminist Bookstore News* a trade journal has ceased publication after 24 years and even the fictional MadWimmin Books in Alison Bechdel's *Dykes to Watch Out For* comic strip has closed.

When asked why they have fallen on such hard times, the booksellers almost unanimously look to the growth of chain bookstores like Borders and Barnes and Noble. Unable to compete with the long hours, deep discounts, free parking, heavy advertising, and iced coffee the chains offer, these small, independent shops are losing in a game they were never equipped to play. Coupled with the economic recession and the pervasive attitude that feminism is "over," feminist booksellers are faced with a tough decision: make ends meet or close shop.

As Kavanaugh swings open the door, flooding the tiny My Sisters' Words with light, she promises the crowd one thing: this is the dawning of a new era, the first move in a bold paradigm shift being taken by booksellers across the country. This is the next wave. Or so she prays.

Just two weeks before the anniversary party, Kavanaugh wasn't in a celebratory mood. She was woozy and congested from a head cold, overwhelmed by her to-do list, and haunted by images from her father's three-day Irish wake. She stared blankly around her store, her pale green eyes misting over. "Sometimes it feels like I'm not getting anything done," she sighed.

The icy clutches of old man winter took hold of Syracuse—a blue collar town with gray skies and an abundance of porno shops and karaoke bars—earlier than usual in 2002. The streets drowned in slush, smokestacks coughed on the horizon, and every day felt colder than the day before.

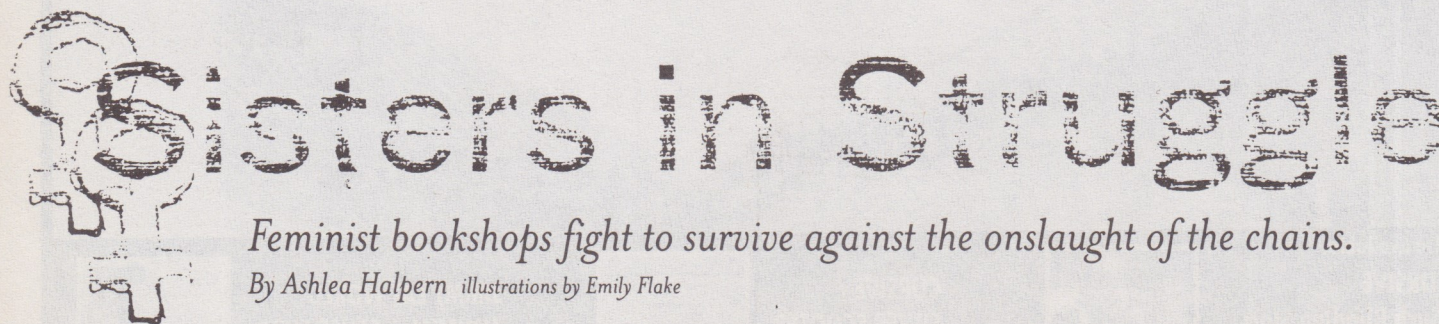
My Sisters' Words couldn't survive another season this way. Sales were down. Longtime customers had fallen by the wayside. Kavanaugh was teetering on the brink of burnout. She wrestled with the store's identity and turned to friends for advice.

Gilda Bruckman, the founder and owner of New Words in Boston, posed the question that eventually led Kavanaugh to make her decision: "Why squander 15 years of networking and community building because a business model isn't working?"

Kavanaugh knew she had her answer. My Sisters' Words was more than the oldest and largest feminist bookstore in New York state. It was also a cultural nexus, a place where women were valued and feminist issues crucial. Ending that, Kavanaugh knew, would be selling out. Instead, My Sisters' Words needed a facelift: a change that would attract new customers without alienating old ones.

She hunted down blueprints from other stores that had taken a similar plunge. Lodestar Books in Birmingham, Alabama converted itself into a yoga workshop. Bluestockings in New York City doubles as an activist network. Bruckman's own store in Boston is reopening as a women's cultural center this year.

The way Kavanaugh envisioned it, the expansion of My Sisters' Words would include longer hours, a display featuring bestsellers



# Sisters in Struggle

*Feminist bookshops fight to survive against the onslaught of the chains.*  
By Ashlea Halpern illustrations by Emily Flake



from the BookSense 76 list, and a fattening of the poetry, sexuality, social-change, global-issues, and children's sections.

"The store has always carried these politics, they were just never foregrounded," Kavanaugh explains. "But feminism will still inform everything we do—we'll never carry anything racist, sexist or homophobic."

As Kavanaugh talks, a customer drifts from section to section until she lands on a title of interest. She pulls it out, studies the book jacket and puts it back. Minutes later, the store is empty again.

My Sisters' Words has come perilously close to shutting down on two occasions before: first in 1994 when the Big Box stores invaded Syracuse and again after September 11. "Sales were so horrible. I really had to decide whether it was worth it," Kavanaugh remembers.

The problems facing My Sisters' Words are not unique. Bookselling in the United States has become dominated by megastores and online retailers. Barnes & Noble, Inc., the world's largest bookseller, operates more than 900 bookstores in 49 states (281 of those under the name B Dalton Booksellers). Borders Group, Inc., a \$3.4 billion Fortune 500 company, operates 400 domestic Borders Books and Music superstores, 29 international Borders superstores, 37 Books Etc. locations in the UK and approximately 800 Waldenbooks stores. Books-A-Million (including subsidiaries Bookland and Joe Muggs) operates 209 stores.

The chains argue that their commercialization of books has increased the number and variety of books sold, subsequently widening the marketplace of ideas but according to the University of Alabama at Huntsville's *Keep Women In Print* website, some chain stores move into neighborhoods housing established independents, match the independent's stock and undersell the books at a loss.

Squirrel Hill Books in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania felt the firsthand effects of this practice. The bookstore was a profitable independent business for nearly 20 years until a two-story Barnes & Noble was erected less than two blocks away. Squirrel Hill went out of business and the chains now dominate the retail book market in Pittsburgh.

Some critics contend that the power of the big-box chain bookstore goes beyond simply shutting down smaller independents. The customer may lower prices today, but in the long run, some worry that such market dominance can lead to monopolistic practices and a threat to intellectual freedom.

"Chain stores are actually deciding what we can and can't read," contends Louise Knapp, co-owner of Word Is Out in Boulder, Colorado. "When national chains are only interested in the bottom line, and can't be bothered with controversial or quirky titles without mainstream appeal, we all lose."

When the southwest's largest independent bookseller, The Book Mark in Tucson, Arizona, closed in 1999 after admitting it could no longer compete with the chain bookstores that were popping up all around town, author Barbara Kingsolver wrote a heartfelt letter to the *Arizona Daily Star*. "I owe my career to people such as those at Book Mark, who first guided readers to my words..I think of them as family," she wrote.

For those independent booksellers left standing, they're not

going to go down without a fight. In 1998 the American Booksellers Association and 26 independent booksellers filed a lawsuit against Borders and Barnes & Noble for using their market power to demand special discounts from publishers, which they then passed on to customers in the form of book discounts. The suit claimed the two chains "received, induced, solicited, coerced, [and] colluded" in illegal deals with publishers that allegedly included secret cash discounts and excessive advertising monies. The two chains denied all charges. Ruled illegal according to the federal Robinson-Patman Act of 1936, the court awarded the ABA a settlement of nearly \$5 million in 2001.

Despite the victory, Ann Christophersen, president of the ABA and co-owner of Chicago's 22-year-old Women and Children First in Chicago, doesn't speak as brightly of the future as she once did. Even though Women and Children First has grown exponentially since its inception, while other independent booksellers in the city have closed down, Christophersen and her partner Linda Bubon have to brace themselves for two new Borders being built within two miles of their store.

Much of Christophersen's strategy for surviving this latest challenge seems to be based on waiting it out. "Corporate business strategy relies on expansion. Stockholders are interested in growth so the more stores they build, the more sales they show," she says. "Many of us think that will implode some day. There's a limit to how much you can squeeze out of the market."

In the '90s, Women and Children First underwent its own drastic expansion, widening its consumer base by carrying non-feminist titles, relocating to a larger store in a flourishing neighborhood, offering teacher's discounts, and focusing on their children's section.

The job of a bookstore owner, Christophersen insists, is to change with the times, no matter how challenging. The struggle is especially difficult for feminist bookshops, says Christophersen. "We want to be what we want to be, in the purest of terms, but how do we be what we want to be and make it? You can't identify as a feminist bookstore when you don't exist." Christophersen remarks sternly.

My Sisters' Word's Kavanaugh doesn't pin all the blame for the closure of feminist bookshops on big corporations. She also feels part of it comes from the community the bookstores grew to support. She faults feminist writers for producing texts that are either too scholastic or too tepid ("We're missing the good stuff in the middle," she says), and she's the first to admit times have changed. "The feminist bookstore was conceived by lesbian-separatist politics," Kavanaugh says, adding how books used to be one of the only supports feminists and queers had. With lesbian life no longer as taboo as it once was and the revolution of the Internet allowing for community building without leaving home, many feminist bookstore owners are struggling to keep up.

Kristen Hogan, a University of Texas graduate student working on a thesis about the transformation of women's bookstores, agrees that many women view feminist bookstores as "relics of the past," an entity as anachronistic as feminism itself.

Hogan has been volunteering for more than five years at Austin's BookWoman bookshop. In that time, she has witnessed the

demise of five feminist bookstores in Texas. She says that the "burden of the rainbow" has now fallen on BookWoman to support Austin's LGBT community through its monthly book groups, open-mic nights and book signings.

Despite the closers and changing times, Hogan is still inspired by the idea of a women's space. "Feminist bookstores are fabulous institutions that keep us in touch with our past and offer a space to hammer out a radical future," she says. "Movements should not have to reinvent the wheel, and I see feminist bookstores as the living repositories of feminist histories that can offer us a foundation to draw on as we work on new (and old) social justice issues," she says.

The problem, Hogan insists, lies not with the bookstore model, but with feminists forgetting the importance of the once-vital shops. "We need to realize that there are always historical cycles; the feminist bookstore crisis is a call to feminists to re-imagine their relationships to feminist bookstores and books," she says.

Sandi Torkildson, co-owner of the 28-year-old bookstore and coffee house A Room of One's Own in Madison, Wisconsin, struggles with this problem every day. "You have to remind people not to take us for granted. People at a party tell you how wonderful your bookstore is until you ask them where they bought their last book. I'm trying to make people aware how they spend their money makes a difference," she says.

Located four blocks from the University of Wisconsin campus, Torkildson says the women's studies program has been critical to her store's success. And while the politics of the day are disparaging, she hopes that customers will begin to once again realize the benefits that feminist and independent bookstores offer.

"Independent bookstores will present you with different things, even if they have the same books on the shelf as the chains," Torkildson says. "The book that they'll give exposure will be based on the individuals that run that bookstore—that uniqueness is important for a healthy literary and political culture. If everybody goes to the Olive Garden, is that going to be what Italian food is seen as?"

My Sisters' Words Kavanaugh is baffled that shoppers assume a chain would better meet their needs than her own store. "How in the world could executives sitting in New York City know what the Syracuse community needs better than I do?"

The now-defunct Giovanni's Room of Philadelphia had a statement on their website that dramatically illustrated Kavanaugh and Torkildson's critique. The statement pointed out that several

of the books a chain had stocked in their lesbian section actually contained no lesbian content, and that their gay history list included a "fundamentalist rant which maintains we are all going to hell" as well as author Gay Talese's family history, seemingly for "no other reason than the author's first name."

But the chains, for all of their ham-fisted, top-down stocking mistakes are attracting the crowds. Today, save for the tick-tocking of four hand-painted clocks on the wall, My Sisters' Words is dead silent. The faint scent of herbal oils—sandalwood, sweet orange and ylang ylang—hangs in the air. Kavanaugh, dressed loafer to collar in purple, pads along the stretch of gleaming hardwood, tidying and adjusting the handwritten recommendation cards on each shelf.

Every inch of space in My Sisters' Words is filled. Shelves are stuffed to the gills with books, woven mats are laid with lunar calendars, rainbow bumper stickers, bars of glycerin soap, and kitschy magnets scribbled with feminist slogans. Baskets brim with organic navy and kidney beans, each wrapped in a stalk of cellophane and sealed with a spice packet and recipe card. A tray divides pin backs by subject: "The Silent Majority Will Be Silent No More"; "Witches are crafty people"; "It's Okay—you can bend your gender, it won't break."

Twenty years ago, Kavanaugh would've scoffed if you told her she'd be a radical feminist, working to save a queer-friendly bookstore. "I was embarrassingly un-feminist," she says, recalling her



*"Chain stores are actually deciding what we can and can't read...When national chains are only interested in the bottom line, and can't be bothered with controversial or quirky titles without mainstream appeal, we all lose."*

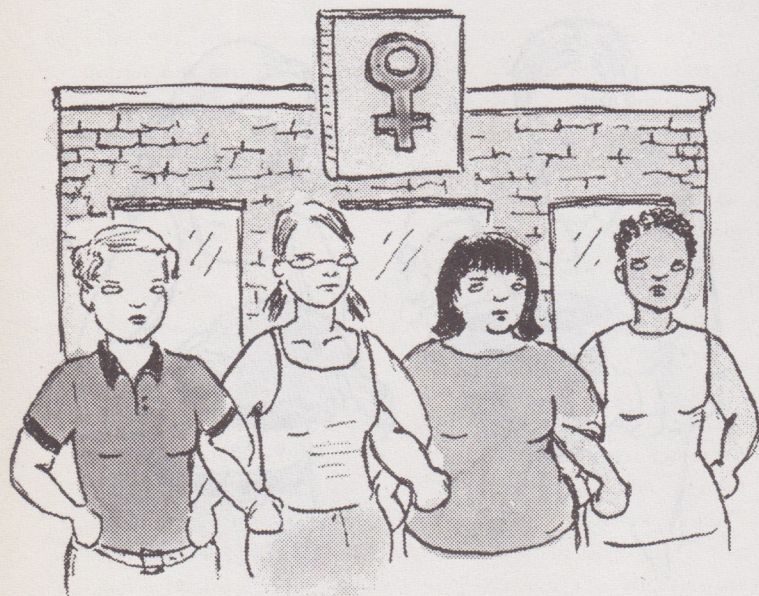
sheltered, Catholic childhood. "I used to be racist, sexist and homophobic, until I realized I was a lesbian."

Kavanaugh first discovered feminism in the mid-'80s when she wandered, by mistake, into Smedley's bookstore in Ithaca. A book caught her eye: *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence*. Weeks later, the same book expedited her own coming-out process.

In retrospect, it all made sense. Kavanaugh spent much of her young life preparing to be a nun, until the Church began administering psychological exams that probed all potential nuns about their personal lives and their commitment to God. "All these women were saying they wanted to be nuns because they loved Jesus. I didn't love Jesus—I wanted to be a nun so I could live with all those women," Kavanaugh laughs.

After she admitted she was a lesbian, Smedley's became something of a sanctuary. She'd round up her friends, pile them into the car, and make the one-hour drive to Ithaca. They'd spend all afternoon pouring through the shelves, then leave by sunset, arms weighed down with books. They'd then spend the night reading passages to one another over home-cooked meals.

She was 35 years old, and things were about to change drastically. She was a high-school literature teacher, frustrated and bored by the "dead-white-boy canon." She was a voracious reader, tearing through two or three titles a week, and a community activist. She wanted a career change to match her new gay identity.



*"Places like this open up women's eyes to a lot of things. We need feminist bookstores now more than ever...In times like these, some people just come in here to get grounded."*

She'd grown up running the family store and even had startup capital. She had nothing to lose.

With the announcement of My Sisters' Words grand opening in 1987, volunteers crawled from the woodwork to lend a hand. One woman Kavanaugh had never met spent eight hours scrubbing the store's mantle with a toothbrush.

But the store's recent transformation had a far smaller workforce: the work fell mostly on the shoulders of Kavanaugh, her two part-time employees and a handful of friends.

One of those employees, Chris Murphy, has worked at My Sisters' Words for five years. She, too, was raised in a conservative home where a woman's place was clearly defined. Murphy was still in her salad days when Gloria Steinem started making noise with the second wave of feminism.

"I remember having really mixed feelings" upon first learning about feminism, she remembers. "I thought, 'This is nuts! Women, you've got it good, leave it alone. Just do what you're told to do.'" She snorted when she first heard talk on the radio about the possibility of a woman being elected president, and rolled her eyes at the idea of women going to college to study something other than typing. "I was the epitome of what I now feel is a horrible thing in a woman," she says.

It wasn't until her apron-and-detergent destiny came grinding to a halt in the midst of a messy divorce that she began rethinking feminism. She was penniless with a daughter to support, hunting for work at a time when General Electric still required women to talk about menstrual problems on their job application and when sexual harassment had no name. "I became a feminist out of survival," Murphy says.

Once an avid Dean Koontz and Stephen King reader, Murphy never dreamt she'd be shelving magazines like *Transgender Tapestry* or books by the name of *Cunt: A Declaration of Independence*. In fact, it took an inordinate amount of coaxing from her daughter to drag her through the door. But once she made it through, she never left.

"Places like this open up women's eyes to a lot of things. We need feminist bookstores now more than ever," she says. "In times like these, some people just come in here to get grounded."

Amy Blake, owner of *A Woman's Prerogative* in Ferndale, Michigan, knows what Murphy's talking about. Blake says she measures her success by the "women that come in and hug me and kiss me and thank me for what I am doing."

Word is Out's Knapp says she also receives feedback on a daily basis from women who are grateful the bookstore's presence at the foot of the Rockies. "[Literature] feeds our souls, it heals us, strengthens us, gives us a sense that we're part of something much bigger than ourselves," she says. "Feminist bookstores are so important because we can offer books that foster and nurture our sense of ourselves."

Unfortunately for some booksellers like Lynden Kelly, owner of *Common Language Books* in Ann Arbor, Michigan (home to *Borders'* flagship store) that isn't enough. Exhausted and broke, Kelly recently announced she'd be selling the downtown bookstore she has run for the last 13 years.

"My heart isn't in it the way it used to be," Kelly explains in a detached, tired voice. "I'm not as excited about it. It used to be that somebody came in the door and I immediately remembered what they bought the last time, what they liked to read, and I had ideas for them about what was new. And now I feel like, 'The books are on display, look at them.' I'm tired of it. I'm burned out."

When *Common Language* first opened, \$6.95 was the going-rate for trade paperbacks. Now, it's \$13.95. The store has managed to stay afloat, in great part, because of its popular gay porn section.

After Kelly made her decision to sell the store, she couldn't bring herself to break the news to friends and patrons. "It's a signifier of my discomfort with my decision," Kelly says, "but if I'm not motivated enough to do things I know should be done, then the store deserves someone who is."

Kelly thinks small stores are a thing of the past, and that today's youth turns to the Internet and malls to go shopping. "This is a pendulum, and there will be a reaction [against the chains], but it'll be too late. People will realize when all the small stores are gone that they miss them and they don't like the anonymity of the big stores and being lost in the shuffle, but it'll be like reinventing the wheel," she says.

On the afternoon of *My Sisters' Words/The Next Wave's* inaugural celebration, no one's thinking about reinventing the wheel—they're happy with the one they have. The store crawls with people sipping hot tea from paper cups. A frigid draft sweeps the store as two women step inside, stomping snow from their boots and unwinding the scarves that hide their faces. An 11-year-old boy with a mop of shaggy hair approaches them, extending two red plates holding slices of apple-spice cake. Kavanaugh bounces over to say hello. A smile warms her face as they recount the snowball fight they'd just had in the store's front yard. Mary Ellen points to the refreshments table and reminds them to sign the guest book.

Laura MacDonald, a no-fuss girl wearing horn-rimmed glasses, wanders the store asking customers if they need help. She is a 23-year-old who grew up in Syracuse, has lived in El Salvador, interned with a labor union at Berkeley, and spent the last three

months in a Georgia jail for protesting the School of the Americas.

*My Sisters' Words* was MacDonald's third stop—after the vegetarian co-op and the peace council—when she returned to Syracuse. Drawn by the political books ("It feels hypocritical to buy anti-consumerist books at Barnes & Noble"), she got to chatting with Kavanaugh about politics and her plans to return to college. By the conversation's end, Kavanaugh had offered her a job.

MacDonald hopes the store's transformation will help women connect feminism to globalization and environmental issues, and attract people who otherwise might never shop at a feminist bookstore. "There are a lot of women who don't think of themselves as feminist. Some don't feel comfortable with the term because of the emphasis on femininity and some are primarily activists, concerned with larger political struggles. Feminism doesn't have to be a consistently isolated thing," she says.

MacDonald believes living in a free society means having access to lots of information. Women having lots of information, she says, depends on stores like Kavanaugh's and independent press. "If you're unwilling to conform, the world becomes less safe. It's so important to have places like this where you can be yourself and be safe," she says.

By the end of the anniversary party, the guest book, loaded with loopy handwriting, sits under a slat of yellow light from an antique lamp. Page after page praises Kavanaugh's endurance, compassion and resilience, and thanks her for standing upright in the winds of change.

One entry reads: "Given that they had to cut my umbilical cord 32 years ago, I'm grateful for *My Sisters' Words* first and second incarnations. Where do you go when you're new in town, when you need a Saturday (or Wednesday) road trip, when grad school is getting you down, when you want to fuck (in a bad way) the multinational corporate beast by spending money elsewhere, when terrorists attack your nation, when you get a new job, when your sister gets cancer . . . ? When your brain, body, soul and spirit need to be surrounded by women? Thank you Mary Ellen for your vision, fortitude, integrity as you make the shift into 21st century feminism."

Near the bookcase of autobiographical novels, a man hunches over his plate, shoveling cream cheese frosting into his mouth and sucking his fingers noisily. Kavanaugh offers him a fork. "No, no. I'd rather save on plastic," the man mumbles through a mouthful of food, adding as he wipes a sticky hand on the thigh of his khakis, "You know, this is a great place to be."

This, Kavanaugh knows, is a great place to be. It is a place where sex isn't dirty, where gender doesn't matter, where age is just a number, where race and ethnicity are cause for celebration, where children and adults alike can do or be anything they put their minds to.

Sales skyrocketed during the anniversary weekend, but Kavanaugh can't help but wonder if things will stay that way. But if it means betting on a sinking ship, like many other feminist bookstore owners, Kavanaugh says she'll fight for her store until the bitter end. "I love what I do. I absolutely love it. I love coming to work in the morning. Not everybody can say that." ©



**H**asta Cuando? Loosely translated from Spanish, the question means "how much longer" or "until when." Tracy Kurowski and Leticia Cortez borrowed the title of their bilingual, bi-annual zine from a film about Puerto Rican painter and former political prisoner Elizam Escobar. For the two women, the phrase resonated deeply.

"Besides the literal meanings," explains Kurowski, "it is notable for the fact that it is interrogative, not imperative. *Hasta Cuando* is an open-ended question, one in which we do not promise an answer, but the question itself exists to provoke the reader."

Another selling point, Kurowski notes, is the lack of textbook militancy or dogmatism in the zine. *Hasta Cuando* doesn't purport to solve the world's problems. Rather, it is funny, irreverent, light-hearted and useful. It has stories on concrete local and international political issues.

And, at its heart, *Hasta Cuando* is a punk rock zine, chronicling the scene in the mostly Latino Pilsen and Little Village neighborhoods on the southwest side of Chicago. A scene often overlooked since the legendary Los Crudos broke up, it remains vital with bands like Tras de Nada, Youth Against Fascism, Sin Orden, Los Jodidos and more recently PKdores (as in *pecadores*, or sinners) and I-Attack carrying on the tradition.

"We don't ask for a donation," says Marcos Quiroz. "Information should be free. If you care about it, you will put it out there, and [HC] will stay free as long as it exists."

### El Primer Grito

Cortez and Kurowski, *Hasta Cuando*'s founders and backbone, had been talking about doing a magazine for some time. At first they pinned their hopes on a budding print collective project called Penumbra, housed in a church basement on Chicago's north side. But after Penumbra folded—partly due to the fact that the ancient printing press the group had acquired didn't work—they decided to jump into the fray and start a zine themselves.

The two women soon joined up with Alberto Vasquez (known to his friends as "Betocore") and Marcos Quiroz, two friends and members of the punk band Tras de Nada.

"There were a lot of bands coming up, and we wanted to get the kids involved, and feel like they were part of it, so it wasn't just another fanzine," says Quiroz.

As all four were activists involved in union organizing and other struggles, it was also a natural that the zine would be political.

"Betocore was on strike with his union, so he was really politicized," remembers Kurowski. "And Leticia and I had just come off a lawsuit against the city challenging the TIF"—referring to a tax increment financing zone, a so-called urban renewal program which critics call a tool for gentrification.

Pilsen/Little Village, where all four lived, was a fitting spot for such a project.

"Punk had become really trendy over the past five years, and a lot of people were just in it for a fashion statement," says Kurowski. "But a lot of people in Pilsen were politicized. For everyone that sneaked into the country, just *being here* is a political act. Martin [from Los Crudos] was always doing shows as benefits for a cause and there was always lots of political literature at shows."

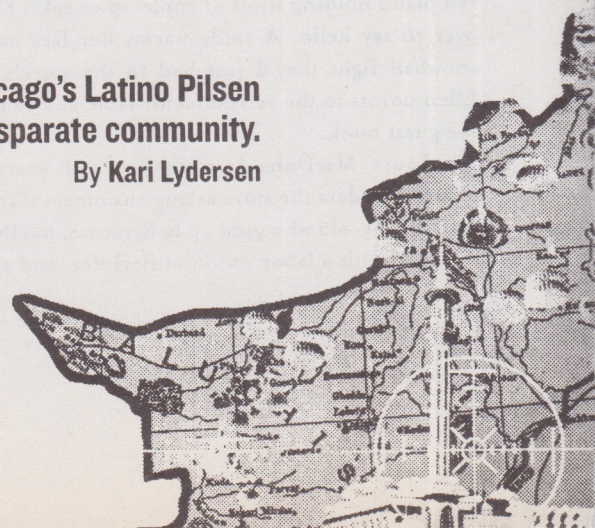
The first issue of *Hasta Cuando* looks like many a grassroots, photocopied zine. The cover shows workers carrying bags of money to a grinning boss in a top hat . . . but the final worker has a knowing smirk on his face and carries a bomb labeled "*primer grito*"—the first scream.

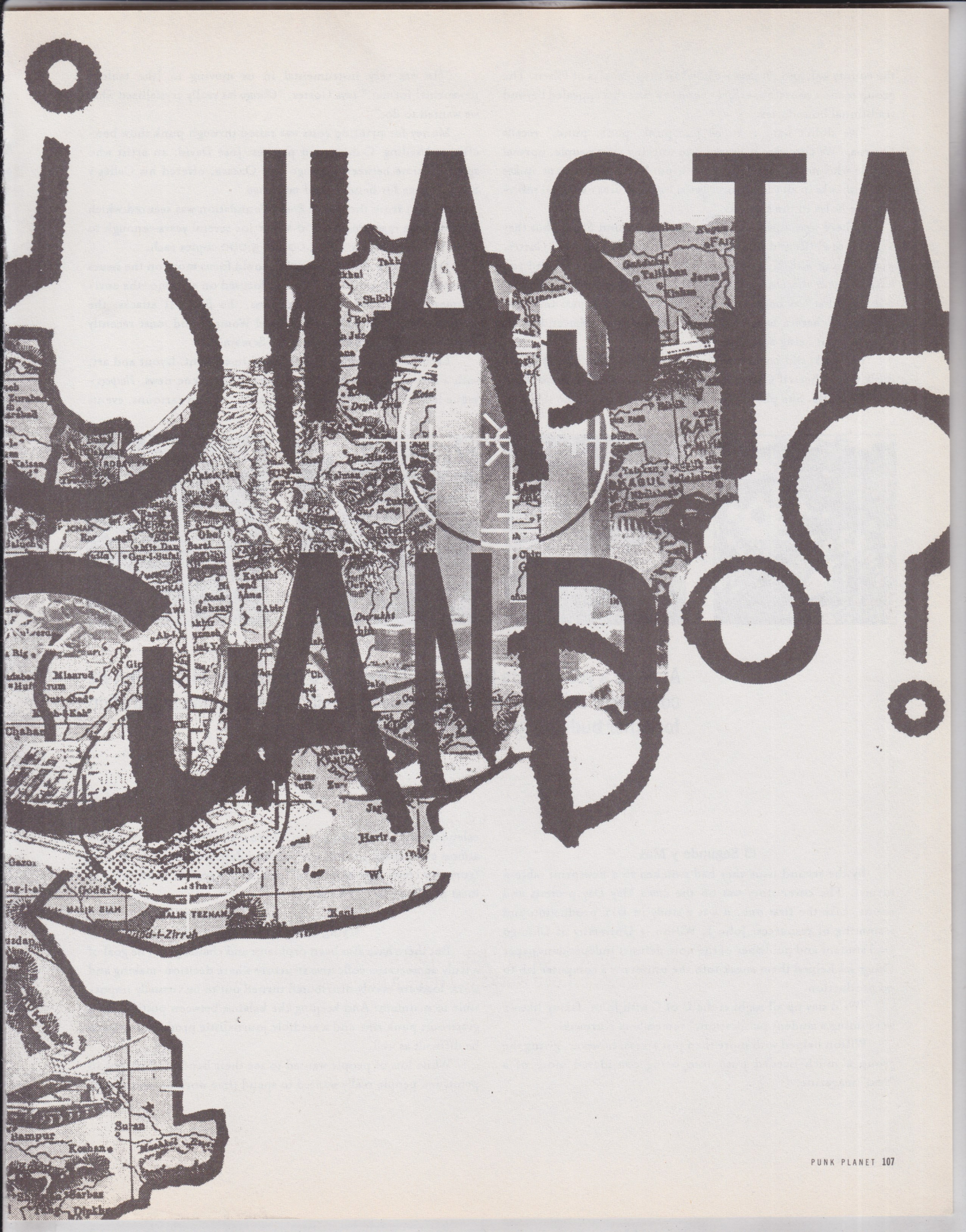
The image is captioned: "Los ricos lo son, no porque trabaje mucho si no por que tienen a muchos trabajando para ellos; y los pobres lo son no porque no trabajen si no por que trabajan para otros"—The rich aren't rich because they work a lot but because they have lots working for them; and the poor aren't poor because they don't work but because they work for others.

Local young artists and musicians contributed drawings, short political articles and show reviews. It had stories about the heavily polluting Clark Oil Refinery in a nearby suburb, on gay bashing at

**An upstart bilingual zine from Chicago's Latino Pilsen neighborhood works to bridge a disparate community.**

**By Kari Lydersen**



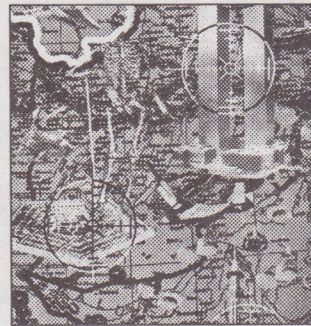
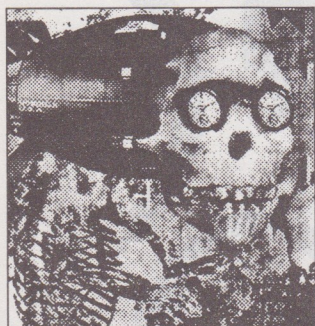


the county jail, and on massive holes in the sidewalks of Pilsen. The group made a conscious effort to create a zine that appealed beyond traditional boundaries.

"We didn't want it to be just punk, punk, punk," recalls Quiroz. "We also were bringing it to working class people, normal people who might not identify with punk. We didn't want spikes and mohawks in all the pictures, we'd have pictures of the oil refinery, the holes in the sidewalk."

"There were some other poetry zines around Pilsen, but they were more elitist and wouldn't attract young people," said Cortez, who is along with Kurowski is a City Colleges teacher. "And you have all these anarchist and Communist newspapers that are really militant—that was never our idea. We wanted to appeal to young people and have a balance between not being condescending or dogmatic but being accessible."

Kurowski did layout for the issue on her Mac, having previously taught herself Quark XPress in order to put out fliers about the TIF battle. She photocopied about 150 copies on the sly.



At twice a year, Hasta Cuando isn't exactly a frequent publisher, but its consistent existence over three years should serve as some inspiration for other budding grassroots projects.

### El Segundo y Mas

By the second issue they had switched to a newsprint tabloid format. The cover story was on the city's May Day protests and events. Like the first one, it was a study in DIY production and scamming of resources. John K Wilson, a University of Chicago grad student and publisher of the now-defunct independent paper *Chicago Ink* helped them sneak into the university's computer lab to do production.

"We'd stay up all night at the U of C with John, faking like we were doing a student publication," remembers Kurowski.

Wilson helped with more than just access, however, giving the group a much-needed push into being considered more of a "real" magazine.

"He was very instrumental in us moving to [the tabloid newsprint] format," says Cortez. "*Chicago Ink* really crystallized what we wanted to do."

Money for printing costs was raised through punk show benefits and selling T-shirts and patches. José David, an artist who splits his time between Chicago and Oaxaca, offered his Callés y Suenos space for benefits and meetings.

A grant from the *Chicago Reader* Foundation was secured, which provided the magazine \$1,000 a year for several years—enough to print two issues a year with 3,000 to 5,000 copies each.

From that point on, the group could focus more on the issues themselves. Each issue that followed focused on a theme—the environment, youth, the 2000 elections, the Sept. 11 attacks, the women's issue "*Mujeres Rebeldes*" (Rebel Women) and most recently the war issue, "The Ends Justify the Screams."

Each issue got more sophisticated in content, layout and art, with a mix of serious political articles, punk scene news, *Harpers'*-esque lists of juxtaposed facts and figures, art and cartoons, events

calendars and trivia word games. There is also fiction and poetry in almost every issue, including a poem in Zapotec and lyrics ranging from the croonings of Marvin Gaye to the spoken word jams of local poet Brenda Cardenas.

### Trying to Keep it Real...

But there have also been problems and challenges. The goal of a truly democratic, collective structure where decision-making and work-load are evenly distributed turned out to be virtually impossible to maintain. And keeping the balance between putting out a grassroots punk zine and a credible journalistic product proved to be difficult as well.

While lots of people wanted to see their bands and photos in print, few people really wanted to spend time working on the zine

or raising money. Kurowski and Cortez began to feel like they were doing hours and hours of unpaid grunt work just to promote other people's work and bands. This could essentially be the definition of a fanzine, but they didn't want to do a fanzine in that sense—they wanted to be part of a collective effort.

"Putting out a magazine is hard work," Kurowski says. "It's not fun and social, you're sitting at your computer alone. People wanted to see themselves in print, but they didn't want to do the work. So many times people would promise articles and wouldn't even turn them in, or they'd turn them in handwritten and we'd have to do all this retyping."

Conflicts also broke out about Kurowski and Cortez's defacto roles as editors. They wanted to uphold certain standards of grammar, spelling and journalistic ethics, while others figured being "punk" included breaking all these rules and wanted their contributions printed completely uncensored.

"Some of the kids felt like it wasn't punk enough," says Quiroz. "A lot of the punks wanted to see band reviews but weren't politically involved enough to understand taking the magazine beyond that. But I think a true punk cares for the information, not just the image."

Things came to a head at an alcohol- and drug-fueled meeting that Kurowski describes as "ugly."

"They claimed that the whole issue of punk means letting anything go as far as grammar and spelling," she says. "They'd get mad at me for having rewritten things, claiming I was stepping on their artists' rights. Which in a sense, I was. For example we had an article trying to link the drug dealers to the restaurant owners on 26th Street. It may have been true, but this wasn't journalism, it was pure gossip. I didn't want to print anything libelous. You need to have some journalistic ethics."

Since that meeting, the base of contributors has shifted away from the young punk scene and more toward older educators and activists in their 20s and 30s, a shift which has caused some regret among the original founders.

"There aren't as many young people writing in our later issues," notes Cortez, sadly.

"Are we being elitist?" Kurowski asks. "Maybe. Which is too bad. The whole point is to allow people to write who aren't normally writing."

Quiroz noted that the \$1,000 grants also had an impact. "It was great that we got the grant, but then we didn't need to do benefits anymore, so the bands felt like we didn't need them."

### A Picture is worth 1,000 Words

Being a bilingual publication is one of *Hasta Cuando*'s main strengths, making it accessible to a large group of immigrants who don't usually read typical zines or alternative media. It has been distributed in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Honduras, Spain, and Ecuador during people's travels and has a regular exchange going with a zine in Argentina.

But putting out a bilingual zine isn't as easy as it might sound. Unbeknownst to many people, translation is slow and grueling work, and even in a community of bilingual speakers, it

is extremely hard to find someone willing to do it. Articles are turned in in both Spanish and English, with some appearing in only one language and some translated into both. Cortez is currently the only translator, as she has been for most of *Hasta Cuando*'s existence.

Kurowski notes that the challenge of reaching a bilingual audience drove home the importance including art in the magazine. "It transcends the written language," she says.

While at times *Hasta Cuando* has succumbed to the temptation to squeeze as many words onto a page as possible, overall the zine is full of photos and art. It is packed with stand-alone cartoons and drawings from local punks and tattoo artists. The political cartoons of Monterrey, Mexico-based artist Chava spice the pages of several issues. In the September 11 issue, teacher Rebecca Wolfram's series of "Nine Ways to Use the American Flag" speaks louder than words about how patriotism—literally the flag—silences dissent, fuels hatred and lines pockets.

Actual pieces of artwork reproduce surprisingly well on newsprint, with whole pages devoted to surreal collages by Tom Sibley and Miguel Cortez; Willie Estrada's block print saying "Learn About Racism in America; Visit One of its Cities or Towns"; Juan Compean's "USA World Tour," an anti-patriotic parody of a rock poster; and Ricardo Compean's anti-gentrification exhortation to "Fuck UIC" (the University of Illinois at Chicago) and "Burn Down the New Maxwell Street" market, which replaced the old market after it fell victim to a land grab. There are also many striking photos, such as Alexy Lanza's shots from Palestine, including one of the rubble of Jenin shown through a blown-out TV screen.

Despite the disappointing turmoil and turnover, Kurowski, Cortez and other collective members feel like the zine is strong and offers exciting possibilities for the future.

"At first it felt like no one was reading it," said Kurowski. "We'd put it at cafes and they'd disappear, but we didn't know if they were getting read or just thrown away. Now we hear back from people all the time. We have a whole gamut of readers. My brother-in-law's carpenter friends in the suburbs read it. We've gotten e-mails from Mexico, Puerto Rico, all over. A man called about a story where someone kicks a dog. He was really offended. We assured him that it was just fiction, we love dogs."

Quiroz notes that when he has distributed the magazine at the hospital where he works, it is enjoyed by laborers, patients, even the doctors.

"It works on all different levels," he says. "People—activists I work with, punks, professionals—are always asking when the next issue is coming out."

At twice a year, *Hasta Cuando* isn't exactly a frequent publisher, but its consistent existence over three years should serve as some inspiration for other budding grassroots projects.

"I hope more people will start making magazines, especially in Pilsen," Kurowski says. "That's the only way to get control of the press." ©

# Book publishing has never been so acces

## On the Road with John Adams

**"D**oes anyone else in your band read?" This question, which is put to me on a fairly routine basis, is baffling. While it may be unconventional for a musician to launch a book publishing company, the above question reflects a deep ignorance about the convergence of literature and contemporary music (punk, reggae, hip-hop, classical, jazz, whatever). The answer, of course, is yes. Everyone in both of my bands—Girls Against Boys (GVSB) and New Wet Kojak—reads voraciously, as do many musicians. On the most recent GVSB tour of the US, our singer Scott McCloud passed out every night at the Motel 6 after shows with a giant hardcover edition of David McCullough's best-selling 736-page biography of John Adams lying next to him on the bed. Compared to Scott, I felt like a cultural bovine.

I would go so far as to say that folks in music countercultures read more than most other Americans. Consider a recent *Publishers Weekly* article which reported that "the number of American households buying at least one book per year has dropped steadily over the past five years, falling from 60 percent to 56.5 percent." These are obviously not rock and roll households. Modern literature has influenced countless song lyrics, from Neil Young to Nirvana to Public Enemy, and every stop in between.

Even a popular (and populist) punk band like Fugazi reveals high-brow literary roots in lyrics such as the following, from the song "Bulldog Front": "Ahistorical—You think this shit just dropped right out of the sky / My analysis: It's time to harvest the crust from your eyes." *Ahistorical*? Damn, who would think that a punk would need a dictionary to decipher the lyrics of her favorite band?

## Got Book?

No one needs a college degree to get involved in book publishing. Quite the contrary; all you need these days is a computer, an exceptional manuscript, and a small chunk of cash. Non-college-grad Henry Rollins established his book company, 2.13.61, in the mid-'80s to promote his own writing, and before long had published literary legends Hubert Selby Jr. and Henry Miller. Over the years, 2.13.61 has inspired others to chart similar courses. When I founded Akashic Books in 1996 with fellow musicians Mark and Bobby Sullivan (who have since left the company), 2.13.61 shared database information and other tips without hesitation, giving us the early jump-start we needed.

The remarkable generosity and mutual support that abounds in the world of independent publishing was a welcome surprise. Equally surprising was the caliber of literature that we were able to get our hands on as an upstart book publisher. Whereas indie rock has blossomed into a broad commercial network, the world of indie literature is much less developed. The average author will have a much harder time getting published than the average band

will in finding a record label. The opportunities are just not there—which is precisely why *now* is a great time to start a book company. You can basically step right in and immediately discover fantastic unpublished literature, both fiction and nonfiction (in fact, if any young companies need help finding books to publish, send me an email at Akashic7@aol.com—I am happy to pass along great manuscripts; we encounter many more than we can handle).

## The Problem with Music

Punk rock's influence on independent publishing is on the rise. When Akashic started in 1996, the only punk-influenced book companies I knew of were 2.13.61, Soft Skull, Incommunicado, Consafos, AK Press, Last Gasp, Manic D, and Exact Change. In the past few years, though, many more have popped up, such as Versus, Loudmouth Collective, Past Tense, Verse Chorus Verse, Drag City Books, and Revelation Books. All of this fresh energy bodes well for book publishing. Of course, some of the most inspirational independents are not punk-identified, including Seven Stories, Feminist Press, Four Walls Eight Windows, Soho Press, Cinco Puntos, and The New Press. There is a growing community of independent-minded writers, readers, and publishers forging new directions—with a refreshing absence of factionalism.

Punk's imprint on publishing does not include a religious aura around the word "independent." Authors on indies don't confront much social pressure against signing deals with corporate publishing houses. There is no publishing equivalent to the biting commentary of Steve Albini, a diehard supporter of independent art with a track record to back up his vitriol. His forceful article on the dangers of signing to a major label, "The Problem With Music," became a centerpiece in the overwrought "major-label sellout" debate that has plagued punk rock for two decades. In a 1998 *Punk Planet* interview, Steve Albini said, "The ugly truth and the thing that everyone seems to be living in denial of is that the great majority of bands that sign to major labels not only sell fewer records than they did in their independent lives, but they make less money." This statement rings loud, but it's not actually true. No matter how many fanzines reprint "The Problem With Music," the fuzzy math cited in the article will never be accurate. If a band spends its *own* record-deal income on things like music videos, tour buses, and wardrobes, perhaps they should be subject to public humiliation, but it is erroneous to suggest that they never got paid.

There are many good reasons to avoid major labels and corporate publishers—i.e., the utter degradation of art and an astounding disrespect for artists—but hyperbole about the perils of signing with them gives short shrift to the real barriers musicians and writers face when trying to earn a living.

## sible to the non-rich!

I have been a vocal critic of major labels for their negligible contributions to their musicians' health coverage. And while I wouldn't necessarily expect small independents to pay for the insurance of their bands, I do think everyone should acknowledge musicians' legitimate need for some sort of health coverage—especially if they have kids or medical concerns. There is little hope of an independent musician or writer affording health insurance without a well-paying day job. I don't discourage authors I have published from accepting substantial offers from corporate publishers, particularly if they can get creative freedom and a decent exit clause. Perhaps this is related to the age range of Akashic authors, plenty of whom are well past 50.

### Don't Talk About it, Do it

Akashic Books has never had a profitable year, and we depend a lot on my exceedingly talented friends, many of whom I know from the world of punk rock. Every member of GVSB helps out with Akashic—from editorial feedback to book design—and the underpaid freelance art staff includes Sohrab Habibion (Edsel), Jason Farrell (Retisonic, Blue Tip, Swiz), Melissa Farris (The Long Goodbye, Dame Fate, Tuscadero), Keith Campbell (Idle), and Fritz Michaud (Quazar and the Bamboozled, Mondo Paparazzi). This is pretty much the best design crew in modern book publishing (from my biased vantage), and it's no coincidence that they all come out of the DC punk scene, where creative innovation has always been a prerequisite for gaining respect. Together we pine for a day when I can pay them better (they, too, need health insurance), but Akashic remains afloat by their amazing generosity, spirit, and remarkable talents.

Book publishing has never been so accessible to the non-rich, largely as a result of developments in computer software. The demand for new publishers is great, as too many excellent ideas and books are never made available to the public. It's a friendly business, and since ends rarely meet for book publishers (even some of the big ones), sharks don't infest the waters like they do in the music industry. Publishing companies have traditionally been financed by trust funds, philanthropists, and large businesses, yet today there is plenty of room for grassroots companies to sprout. In this sense, DIY book publishing is largely ahistorical; but authors depend on publishers, so there is work to be done, presses to be launched . . . and opportunities will not just drop right out of the sky. So don't wait; publish now! ©

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*Johnny Temple plays bass guitar in Girls Against Boys and New Wet Kojak and is the publisher of Akashic Books ([www.akashicbooks.com](http://www.akashicbooks.com)). He writes occasionally for The Nation on music and politics.*



# PUBLISH NOW!

Akashic Books'  
**Johnny Temple**  
sings the praises of self-  
publishing

# BLACK TUESDAY AND THE TWELVE HOUR MIRACLE

How a tiny comics publisher was saved from bankruptcy by a legion of comic fans.

By Anne Elizabeth Moore Illustrations by Aaron Riener

Pulling a double shift at his day job tending bar at Wildwood, a swank Portland eatery, Brett Warnock, a friendly comic-book geek in jock's clothing, took a call from Chris Staros, his partner in the funnybook-publishing enterprise Top Shelf Productions. The call, coming seven years (and over 75 projects) after their partnership was formed, tolled the death knell for the publisher of *Goodbye, Chunky Rice* and *Monkey Vs Robot*.

"Immediately my stomach sank," Warnock recalls in an interview nearly a year later. "All my family and friends know it's bad mojo to call service industry folks at work, unless it's a very urgent matter." Now freed from the confines of his day job, Warnock had been living a double life tending various bars for 12 years when the fateful call came from his business partner announcing the bankruptcy of Top Shelf's book trade distributor, LPC Group. "I couldn't even speak," Warnock continues. "The dream that we had worked on so hard, and put everything we had into, was dead. Or if not dead, severely mauled."

Dedication is independent publishing's lifeblood, but even the most jaded in alternative press know that seven years' day-jobbing to support a fledgling publishing company deserves payback more goodly than the Chapter 11 filing of a company who owes you \$80,000, or approximately a quarter of your annual gross income.

"I can honestly say that except for the death of my parents, both from cancer, I have never been so rocked," Warnock explains solemnly.

That night, the pair sent off an e-mail describing their plight as a short-term crisis that could only be resolved by an immediate influx of \$20,000. Twenty-nine hours later, having taken over a thousand orders from generous and immediately responsive fans, Top Shelf's dream was back from the dead.

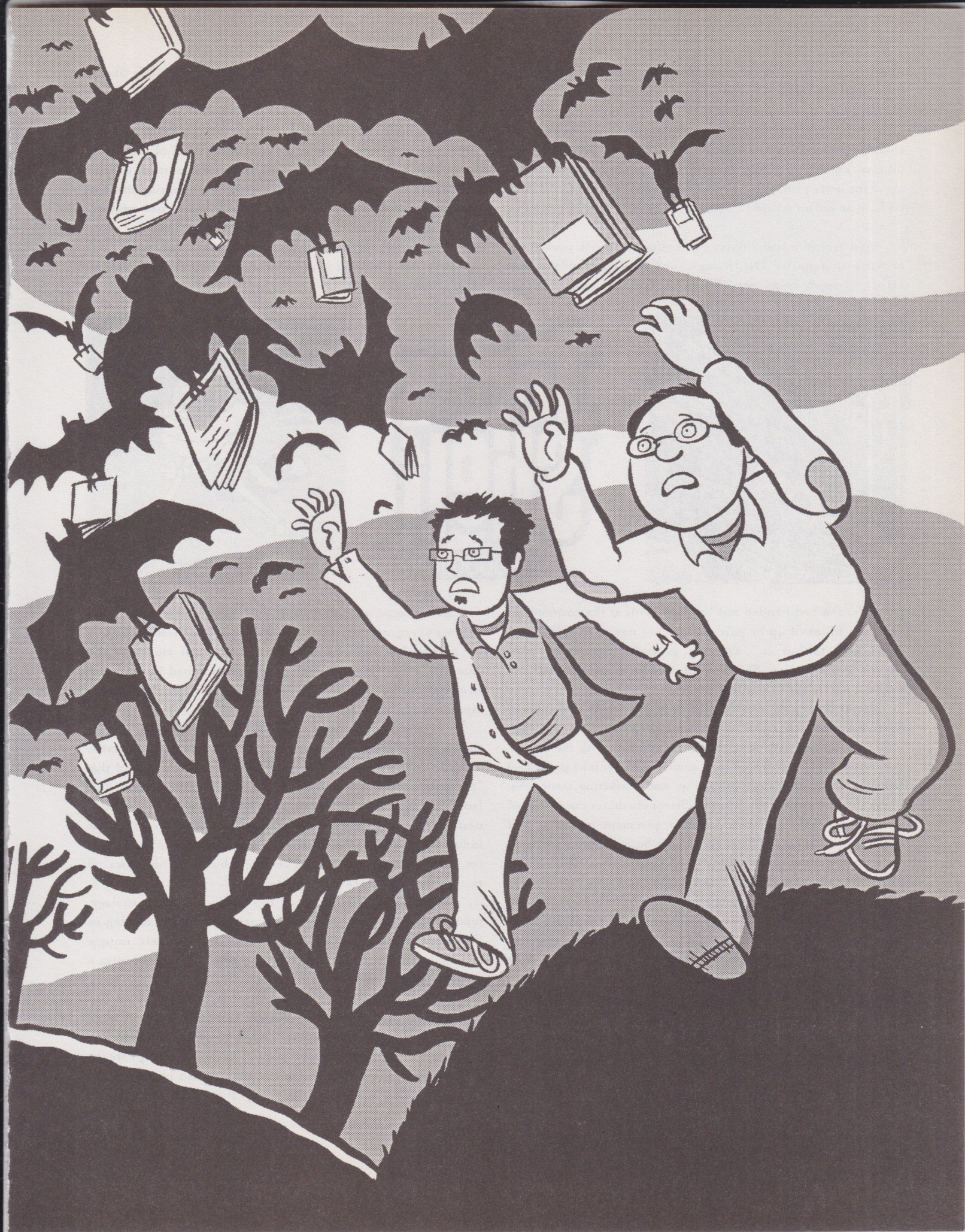
It may seem odd that such a seemingly tangential part of the comics business as bookstore distribution can break an entire pub-

lishing company in a matter of minutes, especially since LPC didn't even ship to comic book stores. But in the days of cartoonists winning MacArthur "genius" awards (Ben Katchor) and Guardian First Book Awards (Chris Ware), LPC and the mass-market chain bookstores distributors like them can get books into have grown increasingly more important to publishers like Top Shelf.

"Traditionally," explains news editor Mike Dean of *The Comics Journal*, who's followed the market changes closely, "the bookstore market has been a tough market to crack." Partially due to the perceived childishness of the medium and because of the form's disposable nature—not to mention the damage done by moralist Fredric Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent*—comics have never really caught on with Barnes & Noble browsers. The heyday of black-and-white pamphlet-style comic books in the mid-'90s came to an end, however, and the market is changing accordingly (if slowly).

*Maus*, *The Dark Knight Returns* and *The Watchmen* all heralded the significance of the graphic novel, which some claim has only lately come to maturity, due to the success of such artists as Katchor, Ware, Jason Little, and Daniel Clowes. Now, bookstores sell more graphic novels, traditional book publishers are considering adding cartoonists to their docket of authors and suddenly comics publishers find they need to branch outside of the marginalized comic-shop market and into traditional bookstores.

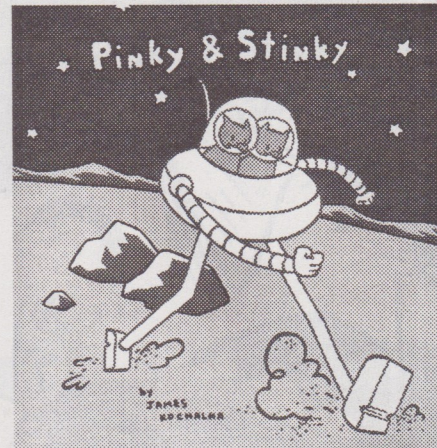
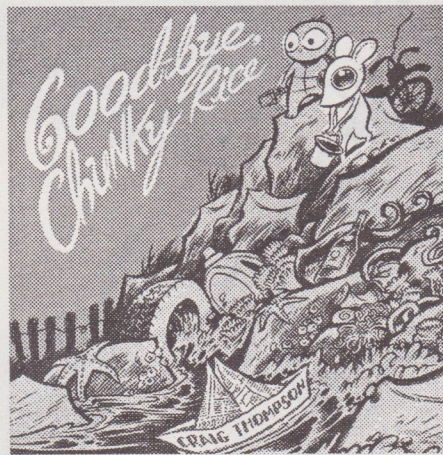
Which itself isn't as easy as it sounds. Comics distribution, lately dominated by Diamond Comics Distributors, the largest industry distributor with a notoriously difficult relationship with small press publishers, is a shaky model on which to expand into any new area, particularly one so important as the book trade. Diamond's business plan seems to be based on long-standing relationships with larger (read: mainstream) comics publishers such as Marvel and DC. Yet, with a near monopoly over comics distribution, Diamond has developed a hearty say, if not total control, over the success of fledgling publications. Many base entire publishing decisions on whether



or not projects find listing in Diamond's *Previews* catalog, the order-form most comics shops utilize to make purchases.

In gradually turning attention to the book trade, comics publishers initially faced two unattractive options: convincing current comics distributors to break into a new market, or convincing traditional book distributors to carry their product. Most initially chose the latter path, although when Diamond broke into the book trade, it picked up many of the pieces left by the destruction of LPC.

At a recent Seattle comics convention, Warnock worked the crowd with Jennifer Daydreamer, one of Top Shelf's newest artists (*Jennifer Daydreamer: Oliver*). A friendly, unassuming,



charmer, she had handed out business cards at the convention, and then followed up by pointing out her new comic. "But you don't have to buy it," she told potential customers, who, beguiled, did anyway. She then customized the purchases with original portraits of their new owners.

Daydreamer's approach is distinctly Top Shelf. Enthusiastic, heart-warming, willing to put extreme personal effort into customer's happiness (co-owner Staros signs emails with the puppy-cute salutatory "Your friend thru comics"), the comics publishers have hit on an industry philosophy, and marketing tactic, that works. In an e-mail from Georgia, Staros attributes the success of his "cry for help" to their constant pavement-pounding and friendly countenance. "Brett and I have both worked hard since 1994 to promote quality comics throughout the industry," he writes. "We've always tried to promote the intelligent and innovative work that others are doing, regardless of brand or our own interests. I think we also attend more conventions than any other publisher, which allowed us to meet and become friends with several thousand comics fans all over the world. . . . Our work has a 'hip sensibility' to it, but no attitude."

"That's such a line," Warnock remarks of Staros' feel good theory but ultimately acknowledges that Staros is right. "Jen and I were talking about why she was so successful today and it's just because she's friendly. I mean, anybody can get a lot farther in this world if they're being nice instead of being assholes."

With a brand name that now guarantees sales of close to a

thousand pieces on each item, the numbers support Top Shelf's theory.

Warnock and Staros began working together in 1997. Chris' previous project, *The Staros Report*, had garnered both Harvey and Eisner Award nominations, and was basically a list of everything Staros liked regardless of genre. Such inclusiveness struck a chord with Warnock, who had for some time been publishing the Top Shelf anthology series, well-designed books featuring new creators. He sensed a correlation. "So I sent him everything I had and wrote him a long letter. He wrote me back and said—and I quote—"This is the letter that I've been waiting for since I started this publication," Warnock recalls.

Staros suggested they become business partners. He offered 16 years of engineering experience gained at Lockheed-Martin to the partnership and now manages the financial aspects of the company, while Warnock—with people skills honed in food service and put to astoundingly good use—manages the creative aspects of the business.

Top Shelf focuses on publishing graphic novels, not the 22-page serial comics so familiar to the form. In a 2000 interview with the online magazine *Comic Book Galaxy*, Warnock insisted that "pamphlet comics were outmoded with the advent of television." In fact, he cites this as a significant hurdle to the success of the business of comics. In the same interview, he complains about the industry's general editorial failure to push cartoonists "to do better work," as well as a "serious dearth of business visionaries" as reasons why comics remain marginalized.

Warnock's comments mirror Top Shelf's publishing strategy: focus on the book trade, improve editorial content and develop an innovative business approach. Whether or not their unique approach can sustain them in the long run, however, remains a concern to Top Shelf fans.

At first, signing on with LPC was nothing but beneficial to Warnock and Staros. The seasoned book distributor allowed Top Shelf extensive opportunities for growth. At the time, they were the third largest book distributor in the country and handled many comics industry accounts, including TokyoPop, Dark Horse

Comics, Alternative Comics, Oni Press, Drawn & Quarterly, Chaos! Comics, and Highwater Books, among others. Unfortunately, it wouldn't last.

LPC's trouble started in mid-2001 when the American National Bank became suspicious of an arrangement between the distributor and a company called Client Distribution Services (CDS), a former distribution arm of Random House, which LPC had hired to take over warehousing and billing functions for their accounts. ANB demanded a clarification of this murky relationship; none arrived, which eventually brought about a seizure of all LPC funds from an ANB account in late March.

LPC President David Wilk (who had joined the company in

**"WE'VE ALWAYS TRIED TO PROMOTE THE INTELLIGENT AND INNOVATIVE WORK THAT OTHERS ARE DOING, REGARDLESS OF BRAND OR OUR OWN INTERESTS. I THINK WE ALSO ATTEND MORE CONVENTIONS THAN ANY OTHER PUBLISHER, WHICH ALLOWED US TO MEET AND BECOME FRIENDS WITH SEVERAL THOUSAND COMICS FANS ALL OVER THE WORLD. . . . OUR WORK HAS A 'HIP SENSIBILITY' TO IT, BUT NO ATTITUDE."**

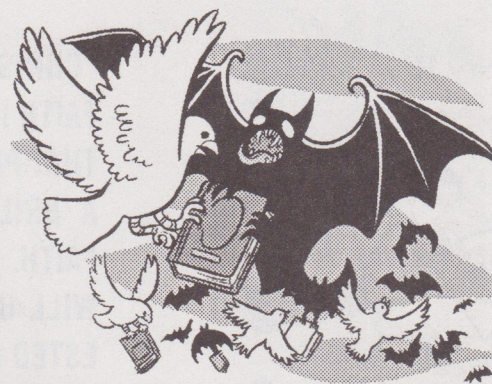
don't raise \$20,000 this month, it could realistically force us to suspend publishing operations for the foreseeable future . . . If 400-500 of you can find it in your hearts to each spend around 50 bucks on our core list of books below, this would literally pull us through—we mean that. We've got such a strong future schedule, and so many cool things to announce soon that I'd hate to think that we'd have to pull the plug right before we were just about to arrive.

In any event, if you can find it in your hearts to help us out, we will be eternally grateful.

On behalf of Brett Warnock and myself.

Truly, your friend thru comics,

Chris Staros



1996 when his company Inland Book went bankrupt, stiffing such publishers as Fantagraphics Books), sent an official announcement to publishers on April 2, 2002. It read in part: "That money [seized by ANB] is in great part the payment for receivables that belong to the publishers. The bank, however . . . seized that payment and all other funds in our account . . . I realize this situation will be a horrible blow for you and many others." Wilk went on to promise that filing for Chapter 11 didn't mean the company wouldn't keep good on their debts, and urged publishers to continue doing business with LPC.

Top Shelf Productions—the name comes from Warnock's work with liquor—responded with an intoxicating announcement of their own. Ever our friend through comics, Staros sent first an alert to the media, which included the letter he was about to send to the general public, listing the other industry publishers affected by the events. "TOP SHELF IN TROUBLE—" Staros' e-mail of April 3, 2002 headlined in blazing all-caps, "WE NEED YOUR HELP." The letter sent to his entire e-mail address book read like something out of a made-for-TV movie (we've edited it down slightly):

Dear Comics Fans,

We have just been informed this week that our book trade distributor has filed for bankruptcy (Chapter 11) . . . To make matters worse, the most recent check they cut us, for almost \$20,000.00, bounced this week, in turn causing the last 30 checks we wrote to printers, conventions, cartoonists—practically every aspect of the business—to bounce (or be held) in turn.

To put it bluntly, even with all the hard work we've put in over the years, if we

The media, however, had little time to respond before comics fans did *en masse*. Just a half-day after he sent the e-mail out to his list, Staros was able to send a follow-up e-mail, again to his entire address list. After the headline "TOP SHELF SAVED BY COMICS COMMUNITY IN RECORD 12 HOURS," the second letter stated in part:

There are not words suitable to express how honored and thankful we are that within 12 hours this amazing comics community took it upon itself to bring us back to life. And in this case, it might also be said that the power of the Internet was fully realized . . . We received over 200 phone orders and 850 online and e-mail orders to boot. This staggering 1000 orders has not only made us operational again (and put several thousand copies of our graphic novels into circulation), but has also reaffirmed to us that the comics industry is back, revitalized, and ready to take on the world. We're even estimating that over 100,000 people received the news or were personally involved in the discussion of this on-line event on that day.

If all this activity has made you curious about our books, we would encourage you to ask for them at your local retailer, so that everyone along the chain, retailers and distributors alike, can also benefit from this spur of interest. And while this interest in diversity is at the forefront of everyone's mind, we encourage you to continue in the exploration and discussion of comics from all the publishers doing quality work these days: DC Comics, Marvel, Dark Horse, Image, CrossGen, Viz, Fantagraphics, Slave Labor, Oni Press, NBM, Drawn & Quarterly, Cartoon Books, Alternative Comics, Highwater Books, the publishers we represent (like Eddie Campbell Comics, etc.), and all the rest (that we apologize for not having the space to mention by name today).

If we've learned anything over these last seven years—and witnessed it absolute-

ly this week—we're all in this together. And the growth and development of this amazing medium is in the most capable hands possible: the fans of this industry.

Concluding the letter, Staros lists a few who took up Top Shelf's cause, including Warren Ellis (who immediately mobilized his large Bad Signal e-mail list readership), CrossGen Comics (whose staff collectively bought \$5,000.00 worth of books for donation to public libraries), Rick Veitch and Matt Brady of Comicon.com's Splash and Newsarama pages (who covered the crisis extensively), and Neil Gaiman ("Neil took it upon himself to discuss our situation within his daily online journal, which just happens to be the most visited daily journal on the web," Staros says).



**"CHRIS STAROS' GREATEST STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS IS HIS FAITH IN TEAM COMIX. WITHOUT IT, HE NEVER WOULD HAVE MADE THAT PLEA AND NEVER WOULD HAVE SAVED HIS COMPANY. IT WAS A BRILLIANT TACTICAL MANEUVER AND A TOUCHING ACT OF FAITH. I DO THINK RELYING ON THE MAINSTREAM FOR SUCCESS WILL ULTIMATELY FAIL, THOUGH—THEY ARE FAR MORE INTERESTED IN A \$3 GI JOE COMIC THAN THEY ARE IN ART."** —Tom Devlin

"It's the weirdest thing I've ever seen,"

one publisher commented at the time, going on to explain that the fusion of help from popular, mainstream figures such as Ellis, Gaiman, CrossGen and Comicon.com was irksome because it was so unprecedented. Staro's letter closes with a list of eight major (and mostly mainstream) comics-related websites that rallied readers to help fulfill Top Shelf's needs.

That is, they met their immediate needs. "All the money we made didn't even get us at break-even," Warnock says. "Between our royalties, between our printer bills, between all these different things, it wiped the slate clean except for our maxed-out credit-card bill. So it didn't even take us out of the clear."

Part of the reason the sudden influx of money did little to change Top Shelf's overall situation is that the \$20,000 initially needed to cover bounced checks wasn't really theirs. Approximately two-thirds of the amount had been intended for Eddie Campbell, whose self-published *From Hell* is distributed in the United States by Top Shelf. The release of the Jack the Ripper film based on the book the previous October had led to increased sales of the graphic novel and money from those sales was just starting to come in when LPC went belly-up. Thus—although on a significantly smaller scale—Top Shelf's strategy to handle the cash-flow crunch mirrored LPC's. The difference was that Top Shelf's clients, Campbell included, didn't mind. LPC's clients did.

LPC's immediate strategy seemed to hinge on the understanding that, since books are not considered part of a distributor's

inventory, the money seized by American National would be easily returned to publishers. Shortly thereafter, however, this was amended when LPC dropped the idea of restructuring under Chapter 11, adopting instead a plan to liquidate by the end of the summer. Publishers then began to be paid a percentage of their owed monies. A potential class-action lawsuit on behalf of publishers distributed by LPC is still in exploratory stages.

When LPC folded, CDS immediately leapt into the game and established itself as a full-on distro, ready, willing and able to meet the needs of the jilted LPC clientele with its standby staff of sales personnel already in place. While they seemed a logical choice to pick up LPC's slack, since the company was familiar with the titles and still had

many copies in-house already, comics publishers were hesitant (considering CDS's role in the ultimate demise of LPC, some hesitation seems understandable). As much of the former LPC staff quickly went to work for CDS (including LPC president Wilk who was recently named Vice President of Client Services at CDS), publishers' fears proved grounded. However, ultimately many in comics publishing remained steadfast in their determination to go legit in the book trade and signed on with CDS regardless of concerns.

Diamond, in the meantime, was finally convinced to enter the book market by Marvel, who had left LPC only months before the company's collapse (Marvel unexpectedly left Diamond for CDS shortly thereafter). The bankruptcy of LPC left many clientele frustrated with the traditional book trade and eager for more comfortable surroundings. The newly-committed-to-bookstores Diamond provided just that.

Comics writer and e-commentator Warren Ellis, one of the first and most vocal supporters of Top Shelf in their 12 hours of need, explains casually, "I had access to many thousands of people at the time." The publisher, he continues, "put[s] out groundbreaking stuff that pretty much no other publisher would touch. They need to stay around. The LPC thing made them victims of their own success; they worked overtime with LPC to get graphic novels into bookstores, and that they were owed so much money when LPC went down is the mark of how well they'd done."

Publishers seemed to agree with Ellis that Top Shelf's strategy

was the mark of some measure of success; all the same, their cry for help inspired immediate jealousy throughout the industry. Drawn & Quarterly, a refined and reputable Canadian publisher with famed production values, sent out a letter with a similar request to that of Top Shelf, as did Chaos! Comics, which folded shortly thereafter. Neither generated much response, save accusations of coattail-riding and party crashing.

After the numbers came in, however, and the crisis had passed for Warnock and Staros, an age-old debate began to be heard among alternative comics insiders, who referred to Top Shelf's marketing strategy and general friendliness as "Team Comix boosterism." Pandering, the theory seems to go, to the lowest common denomina-



tor of comics fans, dilutes the aesthetic goals of literary comics. Like being accused of selling out, being accused of membership in Team Comix implies squandered potential. As Highwater Books publisher Tom Devlin puts it, "Chris Staros' greatest strength and weakness is his faith in Team Comix. Without it, he never would have made that plea and never would have saved his company. It was a brilliant tactical maneuver and a touching act of faith. I do think relying on the mainstream for success will ultimately fail, though—they are far more interested in a \$3 GI Joe comic than they are in art."

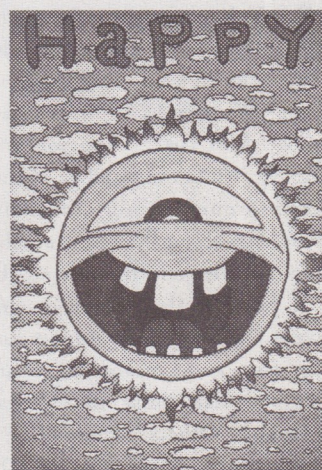
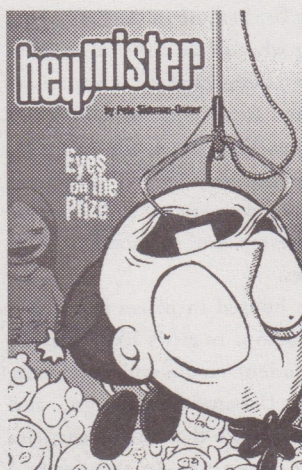
Ellis, however, believes that bridging the gap between mainstream and alternative comics has its place. "The graphic novel business could only be improved by people taking their cue," he contends.

"This whole attitude of artistic autonomy and oh, you're selling out if you go to a label, or whatever—well to me it's a sell-out to be so autonomous that five people total hear of your work and you're pumping gas, or you're flipping burgers, or you're bartending somewhere on someone else's dime. You're making a paycheck from someone else. That to me is more selling out than utilizing the tools that you have to reach the world with your artistic vision," Warnock explains. Limiting your potential, he continues, by refusing to use certain distributors or appear in certain venues, is a disservice to the work, which publishers are thereby guaranteeing will only reach a small audience, and the artists you present, who will rarely, if ever, see a paycheck from their comics.

Of perhaps greater long-term impact for Team Comix—card-carrying members and not—is that the Twelve Hour Miracle, as

Warnock calls it, benefited a for-profit company in an hour of professed need and under tremendous social pressure. While profits remain marginal in small press, not-for-profit organizations like the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund habitually fail at fundraising efforts. The lesson Black Tuesday seems to impart—that comics fans, indeed, *do care*—may not apply in every instance. Perhaps to test this theory, Staros joined the CBLDF Board of Directors a few months after Black Tuesday and will hopefully lend a hand to the in-need organization.

In August of 2002, Warnock made a change for himself as well, leaving bartending to devote himself full time to Top Shelf. "After Black Tuesday, the spotlight was on us, big time," he admits. "I told Chris, 'Everyone's watching us now and I'm gonna go



apeshit if I have to stay in the bar." Now paying his mortgage with his passion for comics, he describes his current relationship with LPC succinctly. "We had the last settlement, and it was a fraction of what they owed us," Warnock says.

The demise of LPC has changed the industry, although not as much as some may have hoped. While Drawn & Quarterly struck out into new territory with a relationship with traditional book distributor Chronicle Books, they are the exception to the rule. Much of the rest of the industry (notably Dark Horse, Image, Alternative Comics, and Highwater Books) has simply gone back to comics distributor giant Diamond. Top Shelf has done the same.

When asked what in the business plan has changed since Black Tuesday, Warnock replies quickly, "Nothing's changed." But this attitude and strategy—a even further reliance on Diamond and a refusal to significantly change its business practices, knowing full well that an earnest plea for consumer help will never work again—strikes fear in the hearts of the rest of Team Comix, who would prefer Top Shelf were around to improve the form and industry. Or, failing that, around long enough to have a drink with the guys.

Still flying by the seats of their pants, but now relying on the shaky Diamond for both comics and book trade for the sale of titles like Craig Thompson's much-anticipated *Blankets*, Alan Moore's first novel *Voice of the Fire*, and Scott Morse's *Barefoot Serpent*, Warnock is reminded that Diamond going down would affect Top Shelf significantly worse now than LPC ever could have. Enthusiastically, even cheerily, he responds, "Well, we're praying that doesn't happen." ©

# ZINE LIBRARIES

## building collections, building community

By Alana Kumbier Illustration by Dustin Mertz

Is the box of zines under your desk (or bed, or in the basement) overflowing? Are you wondering what to do with those extra copies of your zine? Stumped for design ideas for your next issue? Wanting to see what's happened in zine culture since you were a Riot Girl? Then you might benefit from a trip to a zine library. While the number of zine and alternative press libraries is small—around 32 worldwide—zine librarians are working to raise awareness about the resources that zinesters and members of their communities can find in zine libraries.

Some of these zine libraries are housed in places you might expect: in anarchist/autonomous infoshops in cities like Chicago, Berkeley, and London, or in independent media and publishing centers, like those in Gainesville, Urbana-Champaign, and Portland. Others occupy space in locations that might surprise many people in the zine and DIY communities—in archives and rare book rooms at universities, or in traditional library environments, like the Salt Lake City Public Library and the Minneapolis Technical and Community College Library. Some zine libraries, like the Little Maga/Zine Collection at the San Francisco Public Library, have shared a sustained history with their communities (the Little Maga/Zine collection was founded in the 1960s), while others have been temporary or transient, by design or default.

One thing most (if not all) zine librarians share is a passion for zines—as avid readers and creators of zines—and for the potential zines have to inspire people to participate in the production of alternative knowledge and community-building activities. Julie Bartel, librarian and coordinator of the zine collection at the Salt Lake City Public Library, knew she wanted to be a zine librarian before she even had the terms to define what it was she wanted to do.

"I started a small press magazine my senior year of high school and published that for about 10 years," Bartel says. "I don't think I knew about zines really then—at least not by that name—but the idea of this whole other hidden culture of stamps, long reach staplers, copy shops, and paper correspondence fascinated me. After my little magazine died a horrible death I played with the idea of starting something new, wrote a couple pieces for various zines (mostly done by friends), did a little editing, etc. I really wanted to keep my hand in but didn't have it in me to pull something together myself.

"The flip side of this part of my life was that I was working in libraries and pushing them to acquire more small and alternative press publications. So, while we kept collecting periodicals across a very wide spectrum—and encouraged other departments to do the

same for books and music—I kind of turned my attention to zines, which, somewhere along the way, had caught my attention."

Once she had started the zine collection, there was no turning back for Bartel. "Putting together a zine collection was what I wanted to do in the first place only I think I didn't know it yet," she explains. "My goal was—well, I had a few goals. First, I wanted to start some kind of a public archive where pieces of this amazing culture could be preserved and shared. Second, I wanted to use the library's interest in collecting zines to introduce zinesters to the wonder of the public library. And finally, I wanted to use the zine collection to attract non-library users to the public library by offering them something that they didn't expect and perhaps couldn't find anywhere else—at least not here in Utah."

Bartel is quick to note that while libraries may seem to be legitimating mechanisms for zines, the relationship isn't that simple or unidirectional. "Obviously the underground or alternative—or whatever you want to call it—publishing movement has a long history and has been embraced all over the world," she says. "It already is a 'legitimate' form of expression. And while libraries do seem to give a certain legitimacy to the materials they acquire, that culture is certainly not looking for anything from us. Rather, we should be looking to zine culture to give us—libraries and librarians—some legitimacy as public institutions which try to represent all views and which are relevant to a broad spectrum of people."

In the case of the Salt Lake City Public Library, this relationship is working out just fine. "The function of the collection in the community has been sort of twofold," Bartel says. "I think just having the zines here has opened some eyes. I know some of our patrons have no idea what a zine is, and when they find out there's this whole other culture they knew nothing about it blows them away—in a good way, of course."

Connecting people who don't know about zines with zine culture and the alternative or radical perspectives presented in many small publications is part of the mission of the alternative press collection at the library at the Minneapolis Community and Technical College (MCTC). The library began systematically collecting alternative press materials three years ago after receiving an initial donation of about 1,000 zines from librarian Chris Dodge [who was profiled in PP52].

According to library coordinator Thomas Eland, the zine collection is now an integral part of the library's work to serve the student body, many of whom probably don't know about zines before learning about the collection.



DM  
03

"Our college is located in downtown Minneapolis and we have a very diverse student population," Eland says. "Our alternative press collection represents many of the ideas and issues that affect the lives of our students. The perspectives represented in the collection are, by and large, not found in more mainstream library resources, and most libraries in the state do not collect heavily from the alternative press. Our alternative press collection directly supports our college mission to educate a diverse urban population."

As MCTC students use the collection in the course of information literacy and alternative knowledge courses, they're empowered to evaluate the information they receive from all sources (mainstream and radical or alternative), and to engage in the processes of knowledge production themselves, as students in one of Eland's courses often do when given the opportunity to create a zine as a semester project.

While they serve to introduce people to the world of zines, zine libraries also serve important functions for people who are already working on zine projects. The zine library at the Independent Publishing Resource Center in Portland is a prime

**While they serve to introduce people to the world of zines, zine libraries also serve important functions for people who are already working on zine projects.**

example of a space designed to actively support the efforts of people interested in zine-making and self-publishing.

Greig Means, the zine librarian at IPRC, sees the library as an important resource for zinemakers, as they browse the collection for inspiration and ideas, and for the community as a whole. During Means' tenure as librarian, he's seen the collection go from being rarely-used to being an active part of IPRC's activities.

"I think the first two years I worked at the IPRC library, we probably had almost *no one* use the library and no one checked things out," Means says. "Now we have more than three pages of zine sign-out sheets a month. There just came a point when it became part of peoples' community and it was a part of everyone's consciousness."

Part of the process of getting the IPRC zine library on the community's map involved Means' work to network with other zine libraries and to do zine-positive outreach to regular librarians, a mission that led him to create the *Zine Librarian Zine*, a zine by and for zine librarians.

"It's really lonely being a zine librarian," says Means. "The library doesn't get as much use as you'd want, and it can be really unrewarding and unfulfilling work at times. I went to a zine conference in Bowling Green, Ohio, and I met some other zine librarians and it was *great*. I came back from that conference all revitalized and wanting to work on the library. I thought, 'I should do something to keep that feeling alive,' so I started the *Zine Librarian Zine*. And it works. Even though there's only a dozen of us in the world, I feel like I'm a part of something bigger than filing zines away that I'm sure no one will ever read."

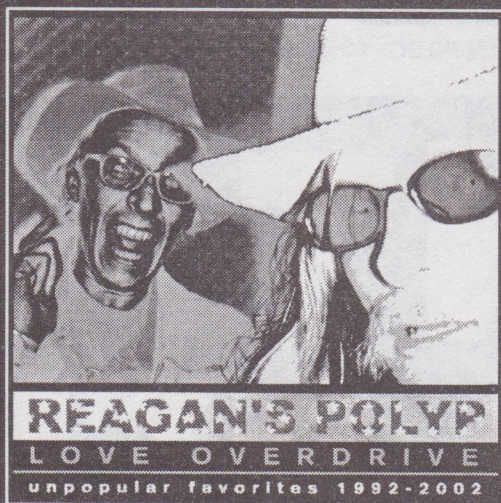
When asked about what he'd like to see happen for IPRC's library, and for zine culture as a whole, Means knows just what he wants. "I dream pretty big," he says. "A lot of times I think about these projects having transformative power on our community here in Portland and on a general librarian, or activist librarian front. I think here in Portland, with the IPRC, I'd like to see it be this well-spring. And, right now, it sort of is—so many great zines come out of this place on a weekly basis. I would like the library to be a destination, but also a place for people to come and feel like they're a part of something that has existed for a long time and will *continue* to exist. A lot of people leave their dumpy little towns and come to Portland because they're like, 'Nothing ever happens here; there's no future here,' and at IPRC we're saying 'Hey—there *is* a future here. This is something to be a part of.'"

While some zine libraries have closed in the time that elapsed during the publication of the two issues of *Zine Librarian Zine*, Means has reason to hope that the future for zine libraries will be a positive one. The work Means does (via the IPRC) provide zinesters with resources, and to provide a support network for zine librarians; the work Julie Bartel and the Salt Lake City Public Library do to bring zines to mainstream library culture; and the work Thomas Eland and the MCTC library staff do to make zines and alternative press materials an integral part of their students' educations all speak well to this future. ©

*Special thanks to Greig Means, whose Zine Librarian Zine proved a valuable resource in researching this piece.*



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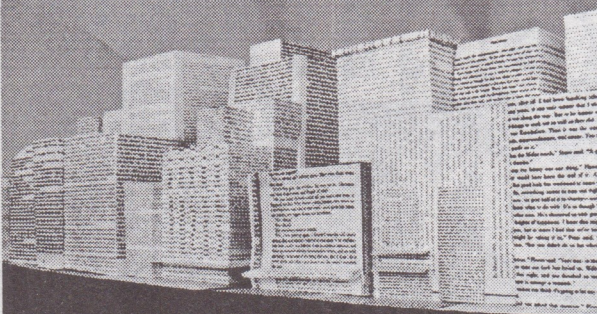


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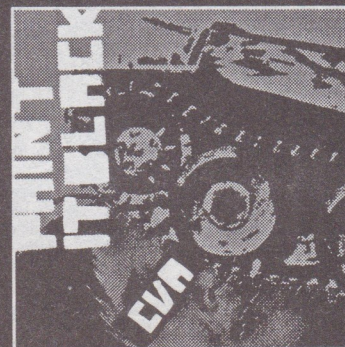
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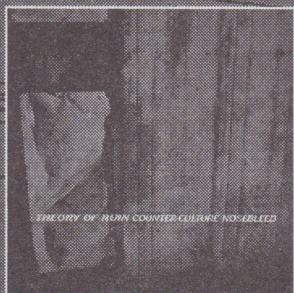
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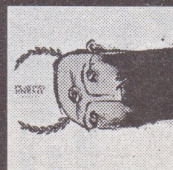
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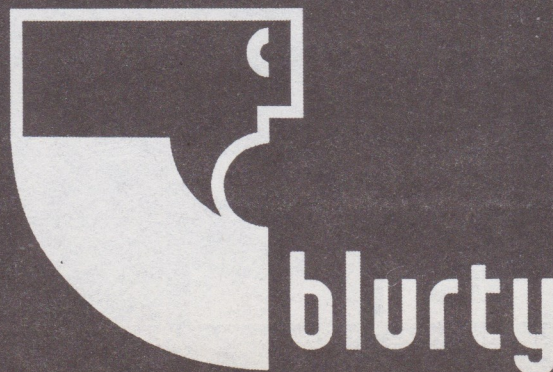
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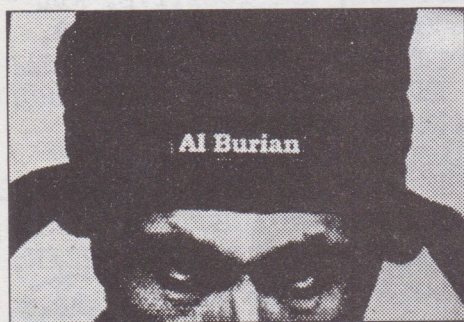
# PP55

al burian

sam mcpheters

janelle benet ramsey

larry livermore



I wake up on the morning of February 1, 2003, around noon, to the grim news that for the second time this millennium I have slept

through a pivotal American disaster and will be condemned to experience it as an endless, all-day re-run. It's a good re-run, though: NPR loops the sound-bite proclamations of human tragedy, assurances that there was a "ninety-percent probability" that the event was unrelated to terrorism, etc. I make some coffee, position myself in front of the radio, and set about my day's agenda of craft projects. This has become the daily routine of the chronically underemployed Burian: get up, listen to the news, wonder absently who I can borrow 11 bucks from in order to make rent.

Early 2003 is a desperate time, an historical impasse where only craft projects seem to matter anymore, a cultural moment in which it becomes imperative to have it all on the sleeve, figuratively as well as literally. The NO WAR button on my jacket elicits random conversation with convenience store employees in my neighborhood. These conversations are statistically meaningless (except for indicating that the majority of convenience store employees in the Wicker park area oppose war), but they make the people involved feel better. A good outfit or political slogan will do that.

"The bourgeoisie had better watch out for me," sang the Bad Brains, and it's true: the bourgeoisie should watch out for the punks of Chicago, they're looking great this winter. The punk aesthetic, i.e. "everything as obvious as possible all the time," is a look which hasn't been this *tres chic* since last time nuclear war got close enough to make writing "fuck the arms race" on your shirt with a sharpie seem like the self-evident thing to do. But of course punk fashion is like punk rock: punk tries to subvert rock and usually just ends up rock, and similarly, when punk meets fashion, fashion usually wins too—look at Elektrolash, or the Sex Pistols.

However, despite its flaws, adherence to the punk aesthetic

pays off for me on Feb. 1, 2003, in that it positions me, world-historically, as 1) the first person in America to make a joke about the space shuttle *Challenger* blowing up (11:58 AM, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1986, third period Algebra), 2) the first person in America to make a joke about the World Trade Center bombing (12:04 AM, Sept 13, 2001), and now 3) the first person to make a joke about the crash-landing of space shuttle *Columbia*, albeit this one in the form of sight gag/ "wearable art." By the time the coffee is finished I've made a stencil that says: "I'm glad the space shuttle blew up." I ponder the implications of that slogan for a while. *Yeah, that's funny*, I think. I get an old T-shirt out of my closet and stencil the message on to it.

It's not that I don't have sentimental attachments: at age 10 I set my alarm for six in the morning to watch the televised take-off of the first space shuttle, *Columbia*. Swept up in the romance of space travel, I experienced a small moment of communal human triumph watching the launch, participating vicariously in history, in what Neil Armstrong called "a small step for man."

The romance of mass national feeling, however, was something I was growing uncomfortable with by the time I found myself in Algebra class watching video footage of a classroom full of children weeping for astronaut Christa McAuliffe, their exploded teacher. The other students at the Carolina Friends School disagreed with my feelings about fascist impulses, thus their unanimous horror at my yelling "hot for teacher!" during the footage. But now, with this new shuttle disaster, I feel vindicated: with two wrecks in 115 flights, the statistical probability of death by explosion for shuttle astronauts is about one in 57. This makes it seem less tragic and more the predictable results of engaging in an extremely dangerous and foolhardy activity. The odds for shuttle fatality are better than Russian roulette, yes, but much worse than skydiving on crystal meth. Would the nation be morally obligated to mourn for victims of a government-subsidized program aimed at getting people to drink malt liquor and drag-race gas tankers full of nitroglycerin?

The truth of the matter is, I hadn't even known that there was a space shuttle mission in progress, though in Israel (the radio informs) it has been front-page news for weeks. Ilan Ramon, the first Israeli in space, is their Christa McAuliffe. The romance of mass national feeling: "it was a nice distraction from the

Palestinian situation," Israelis interviewed on the radio admit, "It was nice to have some good news for a change." Good news for a change! George Bush, only the day before promising war on Iraq in "weeks, not months," finds himself suddenly unable to openly advocate mass murder during the period of national mourning. The war will have to be pushed back a couple of weeks, but then it will be Valentine's day, and that will be a PR nightmare, too.

I would take this all as a positive turn of events, if it weren't for people's general disturbing willingness to forget the public relations fiascos of the past, such as the harrowing admissions by NASA scientists that waste plutonium had originally been slated to go into orbit as part of *Challenger's* cargo, meaning that the subsequent explosion would have led to cancer for somewhere between the population of Florida and the population of the world. Close call! But, using the laws of statistical probability, these same NASA scientists concluded that two in a row was really unlikely, and sent the plutonium up with the next shuttle anyway. Hope there wasn't any plutonium on board *Columbia*—they probably wouldn't tell us if there was, but I guess we'll be finding out over the next 10 or 20 years.

Come on, people: the space program is a waste of time and resources at best, an evil and immoral institution dedicated to mass annihilation at worst. It exists primarily as a research branch of the military-industrial complex, who are hell-bent on deploying "strategic defense" satellites to defend us against enemy missiles which exhaustive UN inspections have shown don't exist, at a cost of billions to you the tax-payer. Other than that, the space program is little more than a vanity project for mankind, who really want to prove that we are not primates at all, but rather some sort of galaxy-hopping Marvel comics characters, while here on earth millions of humanoid primates starve to death.

I think a nation preparing to engage in the high-tech killing of thousands ought to spend a few days grieving for seven people who died for essentially no reason inside the most advanced piece of machinery on the planet. Ilan Ramon said that he hoped his voyage would be seen as symbolic; symbolism doesn't get much more heavy-handed than this. I'm just glad I'm not religious. If I were the sort of Christian fundamentalist nut-bar George Bush is,

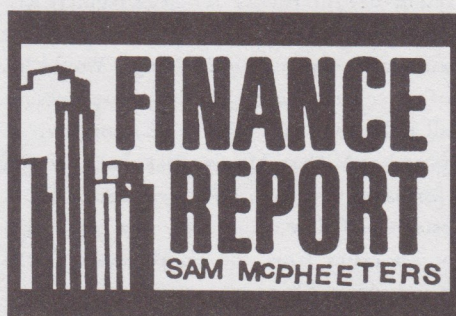
I'd be scared. God's message would appear to be loud and clear: *I am not on your team, Judeo-Christians*. If I was that particular nut-bar, I might spend a little time thinking about what I've done to anger my deity to this point. I might try to atone for these errors before embarking on any further righteous crusades.

But people wear their hearts on their sleeves, and sharpie their emotions on to T-shirts, not rational arguments. As it was in Greg Kohlback's third period Algebra, so will it be today: Nobody gets my jokes. My housemate sees the shirt, folded over a chair to dry.

"I'm glad the space shuttle blew up? That's fucked up," she says.

"What do you mean?" I say. "That's funny."

"You're fucked up," she says, shaking her head as she walks out of the room. I call a few friends to run my idea by them. Opinion seems unanimous: it would be bad taste for sure, and possibly physically dangerous, to wear the shirt out of the house. I get off the phone discouraged. "The bourgeoisie had better watch out for me," I mutter to myself, and that's when it occurs to me that I should have asked one of those people if I could borrow 11 dollars.



## COMPLAINTS

I. AL SHARPTON'S  
PRESIDENTIAL  
CANDIDACY  
FORCES ME TO  
EXAMINE UNCOM-  
FORTABLE AREAS  
OF MY OWN LIFE.

It's early in the 2004 presidential campaign, but already the Democrats are in the Differentiation Stage, which is the period of any public race when national candidates must prove they are not the same person as one or all of the other national candidates. By my count, the office holding five official contenders break down into two camps; Cretins (Howard Dean & John Edwards, both of whom I detest right off, not so much for being pro-Yucca

Mountain and pro-death penalty, but because both are suspiciously smarmy young men in the Giver Of Unsolicited Backrub variety), or Ninnies (Dick Gephardt & John Kerry, both of whom I've detested for a while now, not so much for being half-assedly pro-war, but because they have so clearly been wheedled into public service by their wives, or past gambling debts), with the occasional, rare combination known as Greeninny (Joe Lieberman, whom this magazine is not yet paying me quite enough (although: 50 bucks a column now!) to dig up anything good about). That leaves Al Sharpton. Anybody who lived in New York City in the 1980's is more or less obligated to hate the man. And, deep down, I suppose I hate him too. But of all the Democrats running in 2004, Al's the only guy who says the things that need to be said. And, unlike Ralph Nader, the chap can give a wonderful speech. That he's made sweeping, irreparable mistakes with his life (the Tawana Brawley case for the right, his stint as an FBI informer for the left), AND has never been elected to so much as public custodian AND still runs like he actually means it, is a welcome note of inspiration in this fog of post-Election 2000 cynicism.

Which puts me in a moral bind. If Sharpton has held public office exactly as long as I have, and if he's made far greater blunders than I have, and 2004 will actually be the first election in which I'll be old enough to run, what exactly is stopping me from running as well? It's getting harder and harder to ignore the question. I mean, shit, it's not like I have a particularly high paying job weighing me down. Sears of Montclair Plaza reneged on their offer to let me unload trucks all day, and the Borders across the parking lot didn't seem to think I had sufficient fire in the belly to man their coffee counter. The presidency pays top dollar. Frankly, I could use the money.

This dilemma raises further troubling questions of cabinetry. Jello's brief '00 campaign opened the Fantasy Lineup Question. If elected, would his cabinet have been drawn from the pantheon of My Rules-era Glen Friedman photography frontmen, or a regrettable assortment of present-day Alternative Tentacles regulars RE: Lynn Breedlove, Wesley Willis, and Dreadlock Guy from Alice Donut? Sharpton's candidacy reopens this challenge. Would his cabinet be composed of other social justice activists—Jesse Jackson, Kweisi Mfume, Randall Robinson—or a regrettable assortment of his loutish, portly peers such as Michael Moore, Rikki Lake and Jim Belushi? In turn, this forces me to ponder if my own cabinet would be composed of my esteemed fellow columnists or a regrettable assortment of current associates from the men's room at the Montclair, CA Greyhound station??

## 2. IT'S BECOMING DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT THIS IS HTE YEAR I FINALLY GET MY ACT TOGETHER.

My annual month of resolve was a lot more plausible in 2000 (Year Of The Dragon), 2001 (Snake) and 2002 (Horse). A sentence like "Year of the sheep is the year I get it all figured out!" doesn't really cut it. Try saying this one into the mirror if you doubt me. Unfortunately, the jokers who wrote up the Chinese zodiac thought

it'd be a real hoot to stack the deck with a succession of lowly beasts, and now I have to suffer the consecutive years of chimp, cock, dog, pig and rat before finally, in 2009, arriving at the rather manly Year Of The Ox. But I do have a good feeling about that one.

## 3. MUSTARD, MEET SHIRT!

Why does God allow this to happen? What is it about this one condiment that says to the world, "the wearer of this stain is untrustworthy for even five minutes alone with a 59 cent Bic pen, let alone a job application"??

## 4. LOU REED LIVES.

Am I the only person on Earth who understands than when Lou says (to the L.A. Weekly, 1/31/03) "I hope your readers know who Ornette Coleman is", what he MEANS is "My life has become an impossible lie. I seek an end to my misery." I'm not calling for a formal fatwa here (too much paperwork), but I have to wonder why this jackass is still awarded public forums. Am I the only one who sees the grinning skull of evil under that mysterious, cracked leather face? Am I the only one who has noticed that this same face has recently been photoshopped onto all four bodies of the Rolling Stones? Am I the only one who has a hard time envisioning historians of the 32nd century sitting around and discussing how important Velvet Underground were??

## 5. THE TOUR OF 9/11 RUBBLE MAKES ME UNCOMFORTABLE.

As of this writing, there's a big pile of bricks and girders and twisted metal on the floor of L.A.'s Union Station. Presumably the whole thing is covered in a fine layer of industrial toxins and bone powder as well. The pile is cordoned off in plush ropes and marked by a plaque I haven't yet read. I haven't read the plaque because I'm avoiding the display, and I'm avoiding the display because CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF, SEPTEMBER ELEVENTH IS STILL REALLY, REALLY FUCKING DEPRESSING. Let the good people of the 32nd century examine the pile. Speaking as a strict 21st century kinda guy, I must say I am in equal parts disturbed that: a) someone in New York thought that perhaps the rest of the country had sorta forgotten their woes and should be treated to a big pile of hazardous crap, b) I need to be reminded on my frequent Metrolink commutes that my port of arrival is also on someone's secret top 10 list of Shit To Destroy, c) that the world is, fundamentally, a cruel, asymmetrical place where pain, violence and broken objects are the rule, not the exception.

## 6. NO ONE IS SIGNING MY PETITION.

I don't see the humor in my proposal to have Courtney Love inserted into President Bush's ass. Enough is enough. Really. This kind of execution-as-public-spectacle was a weekly occurrence in the ancient world. Go see Lord Of The Rings if you doubt me. But I am going to need at least 30,000 signatures for the United Nations to take me seriously and, hey, where are you going?



A strapping buck of a man is living alone in the woods. He survives by his wits, although certainly aided by his hunky physique. He can build a ham

radio out of pinecones and tinfoil. He knows how to gut little forest creatures and how to cobble a pair of shoes with his bare hands. He is cunning and self-reliant. And hot. This is the renaissance man from my jerk-off fantasies.

In real life, the only renaissance men I know are actually renaissance women. My friend, Hollie, is probably the best example of this rare breed of lady. If anyone was going to be able to bend a spoon just by looking at it, it would be her; Uri Geller can eat a dick. It's been this way the entire time I've known her. Whether she's commandeering a boat for us to take across the bay, sweet talking strangers into supplying electricity for our squat, or going to school without paying tuition, her knack for working it would leave PT Barnum scratching his head in amazement.

Once, when we were 14 years old, we got a ride home from Gilman Street with a punk band from Buffalo, New York. They left me puking on my parents' front porch (thank you St. Ides, patron saint and protector of blossoming young alcoholics), but when it came time to drop off Hollie, they passed her exit off the freeway. They explained that she was coming back to their hotel with them, insinuating some type of date rape. At first, she assumed the role of scared hostage, but then her wily ways kicked in. Suddenly, she transforms into Molly Ringwald in crotchless panties "the ultimate party girl" and she cannot wait to get back to their hotel. "Oh shit, guys! I just remembered", she tells them, slapping her forehead. "I've got a ton of pills back at my house. We've got to stop there first". So they drive her back to her house in El Sob. She jumps out of their van, flips them the bird over her shoulder, runs in the house, locks the door, and waits for the sound of their van driving away.

That's ingenuity! That's good old-fashioned know-how! And that's just an example of one night of many nights since. What's her secret? What's the "abracadabra, open-sesame" that's going to open up Hollie's brain so we can look inside and figure out how to be a mack like her. For one thing, she's fearless. For another thing, she's good at everything. Seriously, everything. Music, art, sports, dancing, sewing, you name it and she does it and does it well. She's an accomplished conversationalist, charming, and cute as a bug's ear. She gets away with everything.

Hollie has yet to publish a how-to guide on workin' it so the rest of us can learn, but, fortunately, she is not alone in her bad-ditude. There is a whole cache of punk rock renaissance women who have put out books about their crazy lives for us to study and

marinate on. Women like Pleasant Gehman (columnist, burlesque dancer, punk singer, actress, screenwriter, LA party girl), Mary Woronov (actress, painter, novelist), and Cookie Mueller (actress, writer, advice columnist, go-go dancer). It's funny that they don't carry the same name recognition, as most of their underground male contemporaries, especially since most of their accomplishments seem far more impressive. Cookie Mueller had adventures so raunchy they'd make a he-man like Hunter S. Thompson blush. Pleasant Gehman would make Henry Rollins' skanky black shorts-clad ass Get Back In the Van for real. And how come *The Basketball Diaries* is required delinquent teen reading, but not Mary Woronov's autobiography, *Swimming Underground*? Were the above mentioned ladies too busy living their buck wild lives to devote enough time to promoting their careers? Did they have their hands in too many pots and lose focus? Is it another nefarious sexist scheme concocted by The Man? Whatever the cause, do a little digging and you can still find these women's books. Here's a recommended reading list for bad ass girls and a starter kit for wannabe's:

Cookie Mueller, *Ask Dr. Mueller* (published by Serpent's Tail) and *Walking Though a Clear Pool Painted Black*

Lynn Breedlove, *Godspeed* (published by St. Martin's Press)

Mary Woronov, *Snake and Swimming Underground* (published by Serpent's Tail)

Pleasant Gehman, *Escape from Houdini Mountain* (published by Manic D. Press) and *Señorita Sin* (which I think is out of print, but I heard you might be able to get a copy from Amazon.com).

Write to me at: PO Box 4047, Berkeley, CA. 94704



April, the poet said, is the cruelest month. But March can be downright brutal.

It was 1968, and my time in New York City had come to an

abrupt and terrifying end when the FBI showed up at the door. Jay's mother had lied to them, said she hadn't seen me. It was good of her, especially since she hadn't even known they were looking for me, but there was no question of me staying there any longer.

I spent the night in a skid row hotel, cut my hair short and dyed it black, and caught a bus for Ohio. Why Ohio? A couple weeks earlier I'd met a kid called Henry who'd come to the big city but had quickly grown disillusioned.

"This ain't no kind of place for people to live," he told me. "Soon as I collect my paycheck, I'm going back home. If you ever need some place to hide out, you're welcome there. Stay as long as you like."

He'd given me directions and a phone number, and that's how, one frosty Sunday morning, I found myself standing outside the Greyhound station in what looked like every other Midwestern hick town I'd ever seen and hoped never to see again. The name of the town was Kent. A couple years later it would become famous around the world, but at the time I'd never heard of it.

Henry had said he lived with his parents ("But don't worry, they're cool, they'll like you."). What he hadn't mentioned was that they were fundamentalist Christians and his father was a Baptist preacher. Mom and Dad weren't as enthusiastic about having me for a houseguest as Henry was. I was given Sunday dinner, a place to stay for one night, and then I was on my own.

To be fair to Henry, he didn't just abandon me. He figured the best plan would be to find me someone else to stay with, someone whose parents weren't as strict as his.

So it was that I got passed on to three kids who lived on the outskirts of town, aged 17, 13 and nine, if I remember right. They were thrilled at the prospect of having their own pet hippie, and couldn't imagine why their parents wouldn't be similarly excited. They called all their friends to come have a look at me, and by late afternoon I was the center of a posse of a dozen kids.

The young ones had to go inside when it got dark, but the ones closer to my own age (I was 20 at the time) wanted to keep the party going. They had some red wine, but couldn't come up with any pot. I suggested Robitussin, the cough medicine that, if you drank a whole bottle, put you into a dreamlike trance.

There were downsides. Sometimes it would cause you to vomit violently, and it could also make you paranoid and depressed. There were rumors of brain damage, too, but I figured brains were overrated, and besides the world, or at least modern society was probably going to end soon, so what the heck?

By eight or nine that night we were wobbling our way through a pine forest on the edge of town, one moment laughing hysterically at the ridiculousness of it all, the next shrinking into awed and frightened silence as the shifting shapes and shadows threatened to turn into monsters.

I had managed to completely forget about my predicament. Well, almost completely. Every so often it would occur to me that I was broke, homeless and wanted by the law, but all that seemed very far away now that we were having so much fun.

Besides, something magical had happened. A warm wind had sprung up from the south, and instead of the temperature falling as it normally does at night, it was rising. The drugs probably exaggerated the effect, but soon we had stripped off our coats and were running through the woods in our shirtsleeves.

It must be spring, I thought, an early spring come to save me. Now it wouldn't even matter if I found a place to stay, because it was going to be warm enough to sleep outside. I lay down in a bed of pine needles under a low-hanging tree and felt I could live there forever.

The clouds sank lower and lower, until they enveloped the treetops in what looked like cotton bunting. I felt like I could reach up and draw them over me for a blanket. The warm air seemed to want to kiss

me all over. Winter had gone, and taken all my problems with it.

My reverie came to an abrupt end when some of the kids said they had to be getting home. None of them said anything about taking me with them. "You're not all going, are you?" I asked. "It's still early."

A few of the kids said they'd stay out with me, and one said, "I can stay out as late as I want. My parents don't even care if I come in at 11 o'clock." Others nodded at this display of bravado, but added dubiously, "But it is a school night..."

Gradually all but the last two drifted away, the 17 and 13 year old who'd originally promised me a place to stay. Only now they'd changed their tune. "It'd *probably* be all right with Mom and Dad, but it's too late to ask them now." "Yeah," said his brother, "we should have asked them right after school when they were in a good mood. But they're going to be pissed off because we're getting home so late."

This is all very interesting, I wanted to say, but what about me? What was I supposed to do? I finally asked them, and they looked blankly back and forth at each other, then at me. Wasn't that my problem?

Finally one of them had a brainstorm. "You can sleep in the treehouse!" "Yeah, that'll work," his brother said. "Just as long as you're out of there before Mom and Dad get up."

It was the best offer I was going to get. Besides, it was warm enough that sleeping outside would be more of an adventure than an ordeal. I didn't get any bedding, but the boys supplied me with a tarpaulin that I could wrap around me. It was so warm, though, that I didn't even bother covering up with it, just lay there on top of it.

For a minute I let myself wallow in self-pity and not a little embarrassment. A few months earlier I'd been bragging about how I was going to join the revolution and help overthrow the government. Now I was hiding out in some kids' treehouse, hoping I wouldn't get caught by their parents.

But I soon drifted off. It was so warm, so comfortable that it seemed pointless to be worrying about the past or the future. I could look up through the tangled leafless branches into an endless sky. As they had before, the clouds seem to draw closer and closer until they wrapped right around me. I couldn't see anything but mist and whiteness, and after lying like that for what might have been minutes or hours, I fell into the most blissful sleep I had ever known.

Sometime much later, but while it was still dark, I awoke briefly. I was feeling a bit cold, and I pulled the tarpaulin over me and went back to sleep. The next thing I knew it was light, and I was shivering violently. I wrapped myself up as tightly as I could in the tarp and tried to sleep some more, but I couldn't. I finally let my eyes slip open, and what they saw might have been pretty had I not been stuck in the middle of it.

Everything was white still, but for a different reason. Last night it had been low-hanging mist and clouds; this morning it was snow. I was covered in it, as was everything else, and more was falling from the sky. So much for last night's dreams of spring. Winter still had a long way to go.

Fast forward a dozen years. I was driving up a mountain in Northern California. It was another March day, and again it was

unnaturally warm. The valleys were a rich velvet green and resplendent with wild flowers, but as I climbed higher, a chill came into the air and the landscape grew harsh and forbidding.

I was no longer broke, homeless or wanted by the law. For the first time in my life, I very nearly had more money than I knew what to do with. Survival was no longer an issue. For the time being at least, I had it made. Life lay at my feet, as majestic and limitless as the mountains falling away to the sea. The only question now was what to do with it.

For the past few years I'd devoted myself to little more than partying. I romanticized it, told everyone that I was part of a vital countercultural and social movement. Practically every night I was out seeing some exciting new band like the Dead Kennedys or the Circle Jerks or the Adolescents. When I got home at all, it was seldom before daylight.

But like that Agent Orange song said, the scene had died away. It was hard to convince myself that I was doing anything more than going to a lot of gigs and taking a lot of drugs. The summer before I'd locked myself in a room for three months and written a science fiction novel that I thought was going to transform American literature and society. The problem was that locked in there with me was an ounce of cocaine, meant to fuel my inspiration. The result was 258 pages of intellectual diarrhea.

I couldn't keep drugging and drinking the way I was and accomplish anything, but drugs and drink were such an integral part of life in San Francisco that I couldn't imagine life without them. I was spending too much time being paranoid, too much time ducking and diving, too much time pining after lost or unattainable love, and little or no time living.

So I guess my reason for coming up to the mountains was to detox. I was going to spend three or four days in a cabin with no drugs, no booze, and only a wood stove and a transistor radio for entertainment.

The road crested at 4,000 feet but the mountain kept on climbing above me. I turned a bend and suddenly its north face filled my windscreen. Patches of partially melted snow gleamed under the rising moon. I shivered.

It was miles of dirt road to the nearest highway, many more miles to the nearest town. From horizon to horizon, I could not see a single light or sign of human habitation.

"If he's not careful," I thought, "a guy could die up here." I knew in that instant that this was where I wanted to live.

Two Marches later I was doing just that, and March was doing what it always had: leading me up the garden path and then bringing down the hammer. We'd had two weeks of almost summerlike weather. There were daffodils and hyacinths blooming up and down the hillside. I had a suntan from working outside without a shirt. Some nights it stayed warm enough that we didn't even need a fire, which was just as well, because we were almost out of firewood.

That afternoon the sky clouded over and a chill wind blew in. By evening it had started to snow. By night it was a foot deep and the roads in and out were hopelessly blocked. We were there for the duration, till it melted.

It didn't seem like a big deal. It was almost April. Even in mid-winter, a foot of snow could melt as fast as it fell. We'd have an

exciting adventure for a day or two and that would be it. Wasn't this exactly what I'd come to the mountains for?

The next morning the house was very cold and very dark. It was cold because the fire had gone out and dark because snow was covering most of the windows. I opened the front door and found myself facing three or four feet of the stuff.

It was still snowing, and continued to do so, off and on, for 12 days. On the third day, the roof showed signs of caving in from the weight of nearly five feet of snow, and I had to climb up there to shovel off as much as I could.

That was almost fun compared with how I spent most of my time: desperately trying to obtain enough firewood to keep from freezing to death. That involved digging a tunnel from my front door to where I thought some wood might be buried under the snow, cutting it up, and then digging a tunnel back to the house, because the one I'd dug that morning would have filled up with snow again.

The wood was so wet that it would barely burn, which meant it didn't produce enough heat to keep more than a few square feet around the stove warm. So our whole world shrunk down to those few square feet. We slept there, ate there, and, when the food supplies started getting low, sat there worrying whether we would ever get out of there alive.

March lasted until the first of May that year, because that was how long it would be until the roads were clear enough to get out. Even then my car was still buried under a drift, so we had to walk six miles before we could hitch a ride into town. We were down to one meal a day by then, and in another day or two, there would have been no food at all.

That was my introduction to life in the mountains. In the next 10 years I'd have many more adventures involving floods, fires, blizzards, rattlesnakes, scorpions, bears and runaway chainsaws. There were quite a few times I could have died up there, but by some strange paradox, I'd never felt more alive.

I don't feel the need to have mad, life-threatening adventures anymore, though I still ride the London Underground every day, which is almost the same thing. But I'm still susceptible to the wiles of March, still ready to believe, the first time a premature warm breeze brushes my face, that winter is over and all my troubles with it.

We had a night like that in London a few days ago, and it wasn't even March yet, it was January. Everywhere people had discarded their coats and hats and were sitting out at sidewalk cafes, asking each other, "What's so bad about global warming?"

I wasn't moved to go sleep in a treehouse or to plant fruit trees, but I let the warm air go to my head as if it were whiskey or wine. I didn't have anywhere in particular to go, but I couldn't face the prospect of going home on a night like this. I wanted to walk the streets forever, convinced that around this corner, or that one, or certainly the one after, the lights were burning bright and life, real life, was waiting for me.

If I were 20 or 30 years younger, I probably would have walked the streets forever or at least till dawn. Instead I caught the last train home and was in bed not too much past midnight. When I woke up it was snowing, and London was in a deep freeze. I can barely wait for March. ©



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# Prima

by Myriam Gurba

It was the summer before I began ninth grade at St Bernadette High School.

My parents chose it because the girls there looked nice—blue plaid skirts, white blouses and crisp, even white knee socks. Bern's girls were confined; we weren't allowed to leave campus like the kids at the public school across the street. At noon, those kids would cram into little VW bugs or old pick up trucks and go eat lunch at the Jack In The Box. They'd have hot fries and bacon cheeseburgers and onion rings and top it all off with a couple of bong hits in the restaurant's parking lot. They'd return to school with dreamy bloodshot eyes and a nagging stoner's hunger. They weren't bad kids though. Bern's girls were. We had dirty secrets you couldn't see and nobody knew it better than the boys across the street. "Bern's girls'll give you the burns," they would whisper. Our girls, with their blue plaid skirts, white blouses and crisp, even white knee socks were responsible for more than a few cases of clap.

The last summer, before I became St Bernadette's, my cousin, Coquette, came to stay with us. Coquette was the daughter of Aunt Vicky, my Dad's baby sister. Vicky wanted to get Coquette out of LA because she blamed it, *La Ciudad de Los Angeles*, for incubating her daughter's latent criminal tendencies. My cousin's Daddy, or so I heard, had been an old school gangster. From him, Coquette inherited a fire that bubbled in her blood and created an uncontrollable desire to destroy everything in her path on her way to destroying herself. Vicky had watched Coquette's criminal spirit slowly emerge, midwived by the smog and housing projects that surrounded them on all sides, and she didn't

want it to ripen, to become sweet on those dangerous streets, her father's daughter.

It was Grape Street, a *clicka* of Mexican homegirls who had claimed the color purple as their own, that first did it, took Coquette by the hand and showed her what it meant to open herself up to violence. These *locas* were the girls who first realized how easy it was to seduce Coquette with something that they didn't have a name for but existed as a kind of sexy nihilism. This thing that the Grape Street *locas* had was almost like a plant or a flower that could only live in certain places, places shrouded gently in smog, wet alleys, dry riverbeds, and underneath some freeway overpasses. For Coquette, this thing was part aphrodisiac, part drug and it hooked her so that the *gangstas* could claim her as their own.

See, these *chicas* took her criminal virginity. She was 14 when the *locas* baptized her in their shower of smashing fists and broken bottles, devoured her like a tattooed and hairsprayed school of piranhas eating one of its own. The initiation left her with two black eyes—a little beat up raccoon girl—and they also cracked a rib that went clear through her chest and poked out through her skin. But, it was enduring this violence that earned her the title of sister and homegirl, made her an equal to the girls that she had so desperately looked up to.

My aunt figured that maybe the best way to sever the bond between Grape Street and her daughter was to get Coquette out of there, send her away like a knocked up teenager who goes upstate to have her baby and get some fresh air, forget about the boy. But it was too late for that because Coquette had already learned how to make herself numb, become a teenage zombie.

She had taught herself the trick of accepting fate with the resignation of a veteran. The problem was she wasn't a zombie, she was too alive and just 15 and deep inside her there was something ugly that wanted to claw its way out. My aunt knew that Coquette could erupt at any time. Tears of rage could come spilling down her cheeks or something worse, but she really didn't want to be there when it finally happened. My aunt didn't want to see Coquette as anything but strong, the tough-as-nails girl who never cried and that was that.

The box of letters was the last straw for my aunt. She found it under my cousin's bed and it was heavy and wrapped tightly with colorful rubber bands. The box was full of a lovingly archived correspondence between Coquette and five inmates, ranging in ages 26 to 42, whom she'd been writing to since she was 13. They were Coquette's pen pals, these hard, dirty men who had been in prison forever and had nothing better to do than sit and wait to be amused by letters arriving from curious young homegirls on the outside.

The Grape Street *locas* had encouraged this correspondence. They told Coquette it comforted the *veteranos* who'd been put away for their crimes and belonged to Grape Street's male counterpart, 16th Avenue Rollers. In her letters, Coquette would ask the inmates what they'd done to get 25-to-life and they'd answer her girlishly scrawled questions with the dismissal, "*M'ija*, a fine little heine like you don't need to know 'bout such things." Instead they'd describe the loneliness and the isolation of being in lockdown, the daily grind of prison life. They'd tell her how they missed the smell and taste of a woman and wonder how she

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smelled, how she tasted, describing all the things they'd do to her young body if they could have her for only five minutes. These letters were so wrong, so sad and disgusting but they obviously meant something to Coquette and I think they fed a girlish hunger inside her, gave her somebody to imagine as Daddy. She had never known her father.

My aunt sent her away to save her from a lot of things but maybe we weren't the right place. She wanted to cut the cord between her daughter and the things that were turning her hard; anchor her in a place that sent the blood pumping back through her veins and made her alive again. That summer, in Santa Maria, she slept in my room on a little bed beside mine and I was supposed to be her guide back to teenage normalcy or somewhere like it. I was supposed to be the one to teach her how to do the things that regular girls our age did, share the optimism I was supposed to have from growing up on the countryside surrounded by strawberry fields and avocado orchards. We would go swimming and eat pizza, be good, normal girls. I would rehabilitate her, strip the residue of the city from her pores and follicles, give her some kind of urban detox. Except I had just begun to discover how much I hated the things that were part of being a good girl too.

Coquette and I were both new to being teenagers, new to having tits and periods and pubic hair and we didn't understand quite how to deal with these things yet. She had turned 15 in May and I was about to turn 14. We spent most of our time hanging out at my town's one little mall or spread out on the couch in front of my parents' television. The TV sat in the middle of the living room with a giant statue of St. Francis on top of it. St. Francis was my mother's favorite saint, the patron saint of animals, innocent things.

At the mall, Coquette and I would stand around and lean against the wall by the drinking fountains, sometimes smoking. We liked to hang over the second floor railing, dangle our arms and legs over the edge like it was posted not to. Sometimes, we'd congregate at the escalator, us and a bunch of other girls, sip warm lemonades and eat our greasy corn dogs from Hot Dog on a Stick, talk about boys. We could spend hours there doing nothing, just hanging out, and my cousin liked going to Sears because they sold khakis really cheap. She was a *chola* and they were part of a uniform she had pledged her loyalty to. It announced her origins and allegiance, something her purple sweatshirts, Nikes, and gold jewelry, the personalized necklace that spelled out "Coquette" in fancy cursive writing, were all part of.

She'd buy her khakis size extra large and then take them home to be washed, shrink them down and soften them a bit. She'd tear off the tags and then lay them out on the ironing board to be starched. She ruined my mom's ironing board that summer with all her starch and her incessant ironing, but she needed creases—strict disciplined lines running up the length of her pant legs. She'd stand at the board, ironing mechanically, smothering her pants in starch, a determined look on her face as she did this, lovingly adorning her pants with the straightest lines. She ironed everything: her sweatshirts, her socks; she even ironed creases into her underwear. She always wore baggy purple fleece sweatshirts even on the hottest days and she'd stand around preferring to sweat rather than relinquish any part of the ghetto uniform. She wore ankle socks that would peek out from under the back of her pant legs, little balls hanging over the heel of her shoe that bounced as she walked.

Her face and hair had a set of rituals too. Before we could go out, she'd stand

in the bathroom, ratting her hair, spray half a can of Aqua Net onto it to hold it in place and then pluck out all of her eyebrows. She substituted lipstick with eyeliner and drew big mean Mexican lips that made me jealous because I wasn't allowed to wear makeup until I turned 16. Her eyebrows would be unnaturally thin and arced and gave her a permanent look of angry surprise. I'd sit on the toilet seat watching her and perhaps sensing my latent capacity for being bad, she'd tease me, ask if there were any parties, anything to do, anywhere we could go to get fucked up. She'd say, "*Orale* cuz, there's got to be something to do. Call up one of your friends and hook us up." I'd get embarrassed and tell her not to worry; we'd find something, some trouble to get in by the end of summer. Coquette would say, "I don't give a fuck if this is a small town. Even a small town's got trouble." Then she'd smile. I'd smile back.

Everyone thought that by putting her with me, these things, her wicked, wicked ways, would change. Without Grape Street, her incubator would be gone and her hardened mane of hair would melt away as would the eyeliner and the purple lipstick, leaving the naked face of a girl underneath that everyone would recognize from a long time ago. I could fix her, reattach the hymen that had been busted over and over by the smog and the tears and the old *cholos*. But I couldn't do that and I didn't want to. We were cousins, *primas*, and she showed me what it meant to be dirty and bruised. You could see it on her face. It was beautiful. And I liked it. ☺

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*Myriam Gurba is a queer Chicana schoolteaching punk girl who lives in Long Beach, the city unceremoniously nestled between Compton and Orange County. Her writing has appeared in magazines like On Our Backs, Girlfriends, Garage, and Clamour and her fiction has been widely anthologized.*



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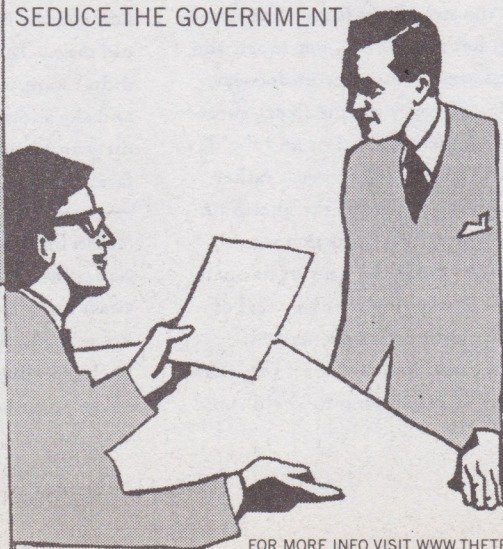
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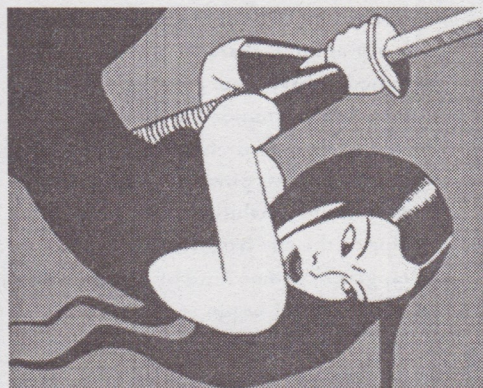
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# You Can Start Your Own Printing Press

By Jennifer Farrell of Starshaped Press

**D**o you find yourself drawn to really interesting posters, packaging, or business cards simply because of how they look and feel? Have you ever wanted to be able to mass-produce your own artwork, illustrations or designs? Are you tired of staring at computer screens, websites, and other non-tangible forms of communication? You may be a great candidate for starting your own printing press!

What is printing? Pretty much anything you look at (including this magazine), has been printed in some manner. To break it down, printing is what allows any given art, be it illustrations, photos or text, to be reproduced. While there are many different methods of printing, I'll be focusing on the three most common and popular styles: offset, letterpress and screenprinting. Each method offers unique and interesting end results, and features a number of pros and cons that should be seriously considered before embarking on your own printing projects. While printing your own art can be extremely rewarding and potentially lucrative, it is definitely important to be fully comfortable with the materials and the process before deciding if printing should be more than a hobby. There are many resources to help you get started, and the purpose of this guide is to point you in the right direction.

## Offset Printing

Offset printing, or offset lithography, is the most common form of printing, and most commercial printing (just look at the fine example you're holding), is done in this way. Offset printing is the fastest, most economical way to go, and in my opinion, is best left to the pros; offset equipment can be costly, and you need to have a good primer on very detailed principles of inks, plates, and presses.

If you have heard the terms four-color printing, or CMYK, this is in reference to the ink colors, which are Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black. Offset presses have a separate plate for each of these four colors. The paper passes through all four colors, which mix to replicate almost every color in the rainbow. If you look very closely at a color photo in a newspaper, you can often see a pattern of little dots made up of the combination of these four colors which give your eye the impression of a different color. Pull out your favorite Art Chantry work and you will probably find a

fine example of how well he manipulates these four colors through misregistration to create really hip looking graphics.

On the user friendly scale, offset printing gets a thumbs down. When I get requests at my press for fast, cheap four-color music packaging or posters (and generally anything with full color images), I try to send these clients to an offset printer that will do a great job for a great price. The downfall of offset printing is that, while easily accessible, it lacks the hands on look and feel of both letterpress and screenprinting; offset has that "perfect" feel, while the other methods make the final piece look handmade.

## Screenprinting

Screenprinting gets a big thumbs-up on the user-friendly scale, because the learning curve isn't steep and materials are cheap and accessible. You basically need only a screen (which you can make yourself), some ink, a squeegee and some paper, and you can do it in your kitchen, screenprinting is an ideal choice for starting your own press. Of course there are a lot of little details to master, and experimentation is vital, as well as combing resources (books, classes, etc.), for tips. While screenprinting is used to print a variety of different objects, you may be most familiar with posters and T-shirts.

Your basic tool is a wooden frame (though some prefer metal), with a screen stretched evenly on all sides of that frame. The screen itself is a tight mesh that comes in various degrees; this weave is so tight it can be difficult to notice that there even is a weave.

The most common screen prep is to coat it in a light-sensitive emulsion that can be stored in a proper or makeshift dark-room until the printer is ready to use it. There are also materials that can be used by the printer like paint to essentially turn the screen into a glorified stencil. Because I'm more in tune with the emulsion method (as are my screenprinting cohorts), we will stick with that method.

When you are ready to expose your prepared screen, you place a film positive (a film positive is simply a transparency with only black art on it; you can have proper film positives made at a service bureau, or you can run down to the corner copy shop and have them made) on your screen and then expose it to a certain level of light (with the help of an exposure unit) for a given peri-

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*This article is an excerpt from a pamphlet available at [www.starshaped.com](http://www.starshaped.com). The complete version contains more detailed information, terminology, helpful guides and templates, and a fairly extensive list of resources you can find and use (supplies, vendors, printing groups, websites, you name it!)*

od of time. This is one of the intricacies that takes some time, patience and experimentation.

When your screen has been properly 'burned', you wash out the emulsion, and the part that was behind the black on the transparency will wash away from the screen, leaving the remaining, exposed emulsion hardened. When your screen is dry, you can then place a water-soluble or oil-based ink on the face of your screen, lay the screen on your paper, and use a squeegee to force the ink over the surface of your screen. The ink will transfer through the washed out parts of your screen, but not the areas with the hardened emulsion. Water-based inks will dry more quickly than oil-based inks, and it's important that you either continue to print to keep the ink from drying in the screen, or wash out the screens immediately after use.

The best part is when you are done with your screen, you can clean out the emulsion ('reclaim' the screen), and start all over with new art! You need to have a different screen prepared for each color you are printing, and you can reuse one screen over and over if that's all you have. As you get better and more experienced, you may find it helpful to have a number of screens on hand. Jay Ryan at The Bird Machine has as many as 12 screens prepped at one time for one poster to speed the setup process and churn out quality work on a timely basis.

### Letterpress

I have saved my favorite for last! Letterpress falls neatly between offset and screenprinting in terms of doing it yourself. Because letterpress printing can't compete with offset printing cost-wise, most letterpress items that you see now are custom produced pieces. If you prefer a less-than-perfect look that reflects the art of printing by hand, then letterpress is for you. A great example of this is the posters printed by Hatch Show Print in Nashville; the natural aging of their typefaces produces a distinctive print that can't be replicated in offset, and to a certain extent, screenprinting.

It is generally easy to find materials and resources, but can be more challenging because the equipment alone is very heavy and can eat up a lot of space. Letterpress printing was the standard commercial means for printing for over 500 years before offset lithography emerged as a faster commercial process in the 1970s. You can still find print shops that work exclusively in letterpress because they do specialty printing that would be too costly to do via offset. These shops are amazing resources for information and materials; I once came away from a shop that had just turned to

offset printing with a bunch of type cabinets, shelves, a table saw, cans of ink and other miscellaneous items for \$50!

Letterpress is a relief printing process, which means that you are essentially stamping a piece of paper with a plate that has art or type on it in *relief*; in other words, you have a printing plate with artwork that is raised from the surface of that plate and is *wrong-reading* (reads from right to left). Plates can come in many different forms, including linoleum and wood, which you can carve yourself, as well as magnesium, zinc and polymer (plastic) plates that you can have made for you—this is the best way to go if you've created your art on the computer. I use mostly magnesium plates made from digital files, along with hand set type.

Before the age of computers, type was largely set by hand. Each individual letter was cast in a metal or carved from wood. To create words and sentences, you would line up these letters to spell whatever you wanted to print. Again, like the plates, type is wrong-reading, so that when you ink and print it (press it into paper), you will see the correct image or word. Type is relatively easy to find if you know where to look, as are presses.

The best way to start is with a tabletop press that doesn't require a lot of space. These presses can usually be found for a few hundred dollars, and generally need to have the ink rollers replaced—an additional cost of which you should be aware. However, if you keep your eyes open, you may find a great deal on a press that simply needs a good home. General materials, like inks (oil-based are most popular), and paper are pretty easy to find, as is assistance in getting started. Letterpress printing definitely has a learning curve that, while not steep, never really goes away. It is highly advisable to learn as much as you can before embarking on your own; this is best done by taking a class or workshop, which allows you to become familiar with the tools of the trade without investing in any equipment of your own. Letterpress printing requires an extremely anal-retentive personality and a great deal of time.

### The best place to start

So now you want to actually try your hand at printing. The best place to start is to figure out what your goals are as far as what you want to learn. If one of the processes above is intriguing, locate the 'community' that partakes in it. This could be one of the following areas:

**Local colleges.** Many schools offer printmaking courses, and the exact curriculum at each depends on the school. Call around because these departments aren't always in the most obvious

places. You may find a non-art school that has a small print-making department and needs students. While most schools offering training in offset printing tend to be much more commercially-focused as opposed to art-related, letterpress printing has a number of options for more artistic approaches, especially at the graduate level.

**Local/summer workshops.** Many communities offer workshops, especially in the summer. These tend to be much shorter and cheaper than taking a full credit class, and are much less time consuming. Chicago's Center for Book and Paper Arts at Columbia College, which offers full graduate programs in letterpress, also hosts a number of workshops year-round for the community-at-large. Check in your area to see if there are any community education programs, or local colleges offering printing programs. Or, look for areas you'd like to visit that offer week-long summer programs.

**Books! Books! Books!** Books are one of the most amazing resources and are a must for starting on your own. You don't get the benefit of having someone standing over your shoulder, but you can sure learn a lot of little details. Many of the best starter books on printing are out of print, but that doesn't mean you can't find them. Keep your eye out at used bookstores, book festivals, etc. My brother teaches at a high school, and when their graphics textbooks are 'retired', he sends copies to me. *The Practice of Printing* by Ralph and Edwin Polk is a great reference for letterpress and some editions have chapters on offset printing, too. Dover Publications, which has all sorts of affordable reference books for artists, printers and designers, published a book called *Silk-Screen Printing for Artists and Craftsman* that I find to be a fabulous overview of screenprinting and the different techniques involved. Both books have illustrations and photos to further assist the learning process.

**Websites.** The web is one of the quickest ways to get information about methods of printing. There are so many intelligent, well-designed sites and forums for printing, that there will probably be too many to list here. Some sites, like [gigposters.com](http://gigposters.com) offer a place to both listen to other printers and to share your triumphs/heartaches in the world of printing posters. If you're looking for letterpress help, a great starting

point is [briarpress.org](http://briarpress.org), where you can see pictures of different presses, read the glossary of terms, or skim the classified ads for equipment sales.

**Other printers.** People are by far the best resources. Once you have an idea of the kind of printing you'd like to try, immerse yourself in that printing community and try to meet some other printers. Remember the importance of making a good impression; if you want to learn something from someone, don't present yourself as a jerk. Be polite, explain your interests, and inquire if they are able to help you or know someone who can. Look around town for local print shops, search the web, or call local printing groups (or colleges that have information on local printing groups). I met Paul Aken through the Amalgamated Printer's Association (of which I am currently a member), and now I spend a few days each month at his Platen Press Museum. Not only have I been exposed to other styles of letterpress printing, but I have a better handle on the aesthetics of the craft. Not every printer is able to take on interns or employees, but that doesn't mean they can't help you or at the very least, talk to you about the trade.

The important thing to remember when thinking of starting to print is that you will need help from a variety of different people. All of these means of printing have very healthy and supportive communities that you can turn to for assistance. Remember that you are the one asking for help, and it's in your best interest to return kindness with kindness; if a more experienced printer helps you with a printing problem, send them a thank you note. I send a handful of print projects to the tech support at Owosso Graphics a few times a year to thank them for doing a swell job making my plates. If you really admire someone else's printing, let them know! You never know what interesting and talented people you might meet by being open and accepting of friendly 'competition'. Paying attention to what is happening in your respective printing field is also key. You may get great new ideas just by looking at someone else's work. In whatever area of printing you may be interested, remember that experimentation is vital, and that you will screw up regularly on the road to success. Like any art-form, printing can take a lifetime to master, so maintain a good attitude, have fun, and send me some samples! ☺

# DIY SEX EARLY TO BED

by sex lady searah

Hello,

*This is really embarrassing, but I have been having problems finding a condom that will fit without slipping off. I have even tried a "snugger" condom and that is even too big. My totally erect measurements are 4.5" long by 3.75" circumference (measuring all the way around) and about 1.25" diameter. Are there any small condoms that will stay on me? I want to be able to have safe sex without having to hang on to the condom with one hand to keep it from falling off—it kind of complicates an already embarrassing situation.*

*Most of the women I have been with have told me that I am way below the normal male size and will need to compensate for it by other means. Are they right and is there some procedure or product I can get? I understand that a person has to be proud of themselves regardless, but when I can't even get a condom to fit so I can be safe on the rare occasions I do find someone to be with, it's impossible to forget about my size.*

*Thank you for your help with this problem. I don't feel I am the only man in this world with this problem and there should be some solution.*

Stan

Dear Stan,

You're right, you aren't the only guy out there with a small cock, but you brought up a couple of issues here, so let's break it down, shall we?

**1) What is "normal"?** According to many sources, the average size of an erect penis is 5-6 inches. Now that is the *average*, which means that there are lots of people who have dicks that are smaller and lots of people whose dicks are bigger. At 4.5" your cock is just a little bit under the average size and should be plenty to work with. Like men have different preferences for women's breasts, there are chicks out there who dig guys with smaller penises, just as there are women who prefer a more well-endowed man, but, as I say all the time, if someone is *genuinely* into you, size shouldn't really matter. But of course, we live in a society that places a lot of importance on big boobs and big cocks, making it perfectly normal to feel "freakish" if we don't have these things.

In researching your dilemma I came across a website called [Measurrection.com](http://Measurrection.com). This site is all about men with small cocks. Mostly it consists of chat boards and covers a wide range of topics related to the smaller-endowed man. There appears to be all kinds of people on the boards (old/young, queer/not queer) and may be a great place for you to check out.

**2) Can you make it bigger?** Well, if you believe everything in your in-box then, "YES YOU CAN HAVE A BIGGER PENIS IS JUST THREE WEEKS." But according to people who *aren't* in the business of selling dick enlargement drugs, that is a bunch of crap. There is no pill or drug that has been scientifically proven to enlarge the penis. *None*.

There are surgical options but they are scary and don't actually produce great results. The first is a ligament-cutting procedure where they actually sever your suspensory ligament (which attaches your dick to the pubic bone). This lets the penis hang a little further outside of the body and makes it look up to 1" longer. Oh, but now it faces down when you have an erection and can sometimes be "wobbly" during intercourse. That sounds great, eh? If thickness is what you want (which I know isn't

what you were asking about, but indulge me here), you can have fat from other parts of your body injected into your dick. Yum! There is now a great possibility of the new fat deposits shifting and moving, making your new, fat cock a new, fat, *lumpy* cock. Yikes. Also, apparently there is no way to make the head of the penis fatter, so even if you get a fat shaft, you still will have your original little penis head. And, of course, there is *always* a risk that something could go terribly wrong and you could be left permanently damaged. From what the results sound like, it really doesn't seem worth that risk, does it?

Now there are ways you can make your dick *seem* larger. You can pretty easily buy extensions and sleeves that add length and/or width so that you can "fill up" your partner better. Penis pumps may also temporarily make your cock seem larger because they engorge it and make it swell, but that effect isn't permanent. I have heard people say that if you pump your dick a lot and consistently you can gain size as long as you keep up a regular pumping schedule—I don't believe this claim however. You can't make your arms longer by hanging from them every day (remember when Bobby Brady tried that?).

As for relations with women—OK, so maybe your small dick will leave some women unsatisfied. There are women who want to be really filled up when they are having intercourse and you may want to try some sort of sleeve or extension for them. But also, knowing that most women don't orgasm from intercourse alone (no matter *how* big the cock is), work on refining your oral and manual techniques so that you can have confidence in your abilities to please your partner. I know a *lot* of women who would choose great tongue technique over a big cock any day (and these are women who actually like cock!).

**3) Using condoms on a small penis.** As you mentioned, they do make snugger-fit condoms for men with smaller cocks. If you have only tried one brand, I would suggest perhaps trying others, as they vary in size. Definitely check out Japanese-made condoms, as they tend to be a little smaller.

But if you have tried all the smaller condoms you can find, you may want to think about using a cockring to hold it on. While most cockrings are meant to go behind your cock and balls (and may be too large for you), there are a lot of rings on the market these days that are made of a super-stretchy material that would not only hold pretty tight, but may actually provide your partner with a little extra stimulation. They also make cockrings out of leather and fabric that are fully adjustable with Velcro, but the leather/fabric may be irritating to your partner's privates. Try putting one of these stretchy cockrings (available at fine websites like [early2bed.com](http://early2bed.com)) over the condom at the base of your penis and it should help hold the rubber on (you may want to experiment alone before busting it out in front of a new partner).

Hopefully this information will help you. Please remember that you are not the only one with this kind of problem and it shouldn't keep you from having a safe and happy sex life! ☺

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Got questions? E-mail me at [diysex@punkplanet.com](mailto:diysex@punkplanet.com). My shop, *Early to Bed*, is at 5232 N. Sheridan in Chicago. We're online at [www.early2bed.com](http://www.early2bed.com). Thanks!

# DIY food EVERYTHING THAT

## Pyromania

Music has power. Beyond that, music also comforts. Generally, the power and energy of rock'n'roll or punk gives me a sense of ease because they're the sounds that formed my youth and still do today. But I'm also comforted by easy listening pop music so often heard on any Muzak station. It's nostalgic car music to me—both my mom and my school bus driver listened to the definitive '70s AM radio, exposing me to varying levels of the quintessential-sappy love song.

The disparity between the sounds of rock and pop illuminate the basic elements of food: the raw and the cooked. The combination of music and food are two of the most formative elements of my life. Charting a history, the opposing sounds of rock and pop represent significant milestones in my life and signal my increasing love and appreciation for the kitchen and music itself.

Growing up, I never had any music rules. My parents were surprising cool about my various musical interests, which allowed my choices to run far and wide. I was first introduced to music from the jukebox at my dad's tavern. He would bring home the 45s as they went out of rotation; anything from Pablo Cruise to Funkadelic hit the family turntable.

But soon, I discovered musicians younger than my parents and traded the 45s for singles of bands like the Dead Kennedys. The first record I requested as a birthday gift was *Cream Corn* by the Butthole Surfers. Suprisingly, my mom actually bought it! Looking back, I realize how odd she must have felt going into our region's only record store/headshop—not her typical destination—asking for the new release by a band called The Butthole Surfers. Although supportive of my interests, the Dead Kennedys, *Holiday in Cambodia* cover alone disturbed her. I knew enough to never play the music in her presence. She just liked her light rock radio that my sister and I switched off whenever she exited the car.

Of course, the music I loved at the time couldn't be heard on the radio, so Def Leppard was as hard as it would get. My mom tolerated it, believing that all of my records sounded like the radio-friendly *Rock of Ages*. I, like many teenagers, lived a musical double life, tolerating my mom's AM radio while my music remained under wraps.

My music and I lived in my bedroom. When I listened to my records, it was in my room on headphones. I still remember that first time I heard Gibby Haynes voice so close to my ears—I think it shook the phones right off my head. Even though the music gave me more of a charge because of a slight fear factor, I liked the fact that it was my music and reveled in my solitude with it. I especially sought the solace of my music in rough times, which are all of the time when you're a teenager. This space I created for myself became a studio for my own forms of expression, inspired by the music. Drawings and

paintings began to illustrate my anguished teenage existence.

Just entering that angry teen phase, all the angst came together—culminating in my music and family life. There were no soothing AM sounds (though listening to this today pulls at my heartstrings harder than any guitar riff can). We were the first kids in school to have divorced parents—a real taboo in parochial school. When my dad moved out, I was forced to step up and take responsibility for both my sister and the house, while my mom increased her working hours. The best part about being in charge was having complete control of the stereo. As long as I could rock out my responsibilities, it was tolerable.

Cooking was a new area for me. My dad used to do all of the cooking, so it was a real learning experience going solo. This new outlet for me—the kitchen—brought my music and me out of the bedroom where I had gone to deal with my sadness or frustrations. Now, a loud, nearly inaudible rendition of "Police Truck" blaring throughout the house was just enough to get me started in the kitchen to begin experimentation.

Mirroring my home life, my cooking took merciless directions. I made desperate attempts at homemade macaroni and cheese when we didn't have a fast box-fix in the pantry. I ruined many eggs trying to make them sunny-side up, and even rendered one pan unusable from burnt rice. I discovered the most ingenious way to get back at my sister, who wasn't too helpful in this new version of playing house. Any arguing between us and I would slip some anise seeds or black peppercorns into her peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Fortunately, these food vendettas were brief and my sister and I found that baking together was an agreeable area for us (thanks to my grandma).

Somehow making it through the rough times, I eventually began to like cooking—at some point I even turned down the stereo volume to an audible and appreciable level of listening. The kitchen became a gathering place for our new version of the nuclear family. My sister forgave me for the peppercorn incidents, becoming a good cook herself. I still had all of those typical teenage issues, but I also had a kitchen and my record collection to rock it out.

"Rock and roll can save your soul"—for me, it did and still does. Not much has changed since the dichotomous days of my mom's radio to my Dead Kennedys. I still like the rock, but without my mom's sappy love songs surrounding it and '70s AM radio long gone, I've found a correlation between light rock and the cooking process.

Cooking requires patience, attention and, if you're serious about it, a little love—like an AM pop song. I've found the perfect balance between an easy listening kitchen scene and a hard rockin' soundtrack to procure great things from the kitchen. Although the tempo of the

# EATS, LIVES

by stacey gengo

music often belies the serenity I find in the kitchen, it gives me comfort—just like my early cooking days, but with far less teen anxiety. I like the juxtaposition of heavy music with technical work. As the cooking process wears on, I become less focused on my worries outside of the kitchen and more composed about creating something. It's an easy alternative within our therapy-seeking society—just put on a record, set out the ingredients and immerse yourself in cooking.

## The Kitchen Torch.

I've discovered a single kitchen tool that, in its function, embodies my kitchen philosophy: the kitchen torch. The delicate touch of fire to food—what could be more punk rock in the kitchen? This little gadget was mainly invented to assist pastry chefs with delicate heating, but they are also available to home cooks. Now, you too can create that perfect caramelized sugar topping on just about anything. And, really, how cool is the concept of a kitchen blowtorch?

This gadget is an essential part of the famous French dessert *crème brûlée*. This classic sweet is a rich custard of egg yolks, sugar, and cream first cooked in the oven, then chilled. To complete the dessert the custard is topped with a layer of brown sugar and torched to create the *brûlée*—literally, "burnt sugar."

When the fire is applied, however, you need a delicate touch. You can easily burn the sugar if heat is applied a nanosecond too long or too close to the surface, like playing an Amon Düül II jam (thanks Anthony) just a bit too loud would fry your stereo speakers. When done properly, this dessert is, in a word, delicious, and worth the purchase of the torch. The combination of a delicate layer of caramelized sugar hiding a rich, smooth custard below is one of the great French inventions.

But realistically, how often would the average home cook make *crème brûlée*, aside from the special occasion? Not many, I assume, unless you like to frequently treat yourself—which is an OK act in my book. But there are some other things you can do to experiment with the torch in the kitchen.

A nice choice is a grapefruit *brûlée*: Slice a grapefruit in half, cover it with brown sugar and lightly apply the torch to the sugar. The raw tang of the grapefruit *rocks* the cooked sweetness of the sugar, a definitive example of the raw and the cooked.

A British company, Blue Flame, makes many different versions and sizes of cooking torches. Browsing their web site, I learned of their many uses:

- On meringue pies or baked Alaska.
- To blacken tomatoes, onions or peppers.
- Brown the top of roasts, for added flavor.

- Melt cheese on the top of casseroles, onion soup, or gratins.
- Sculpting and thawing ice for ice sculptures.

The torches have small butane tanks that allow a "burn time" of 25 minutes to two hours, depending on the size of the torch. One of the models even comes with a soldering attachment! Additionally, you can use the torch for projects outside of the kitchen, like heating copper. It creates a patina on the metal, which can give your favorite craft project a little something extra. How about a wind chime or candle shade? Just remember to wear gloves.

With more uses than you can shake a stick at, the kitchen torch is a mighty little kitchen tool. Its power represents all of the emotion that comes from a solid rockin' composition, like a good, long Acid Mothers Temple and the Melting Paraiso UFO jam—but its delicacy and sensitivity towards food are just like those "Silly Love Songs." As the Wings version of Paul McCartney once said: "What's wrong that? So, go ahead and rock out in the kitchen—just add a delicate flame. ©

## Crème Brûlée

*Larousse Gastronomique* is a culinary encyclopedia. It's been continuously updated since its origin in 1938 and contains a wealth of knowledge on the art and science of food. The following is the encyclopedia's recipe for *crème brûlée*:

- Slit open a vanilla bean lengthwise and remove seeds with a knife.
- Place them in a bowl with 3 egg yolks and 1/4 cup of superfine sugar.
- Mix well with a whisk.
- Gradually whisk into the yolk mixture 1-1/4 cups of heavy cream and 1/4 cup of milk.
- Strain this mixture through a fine sieve.
- Pour into small oven-safe straight-sided dishes, 3-4" in diameter (ramekins).
- Fill a baking pan that's large enough to fit all of the dishes with enough water to reach halfway up the side of the little dishes (a *bain marie*).
- Cook for 30 minutes in a preheated 375° oven.
- Remove from the oven and then remove the ramekins from the *bain marie* when cool enough to touch. Allow cooling completely before placing in the refrigerator for at least one hour before serving.

For the *brûlée*:

- Sprinkle with 2/3-cup soft brown sugar on top of the custards to cover completely.
- Broil the sugar with the kitchen torch until the sugar has caramelized.
- Refrigerate before serving.

# PAPING

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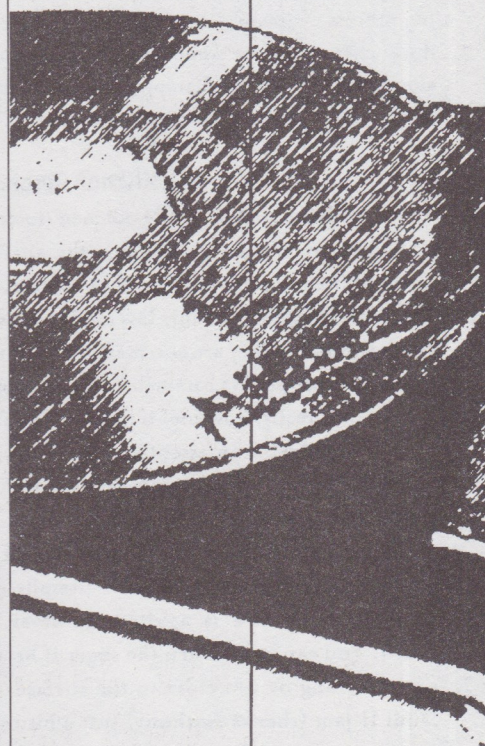
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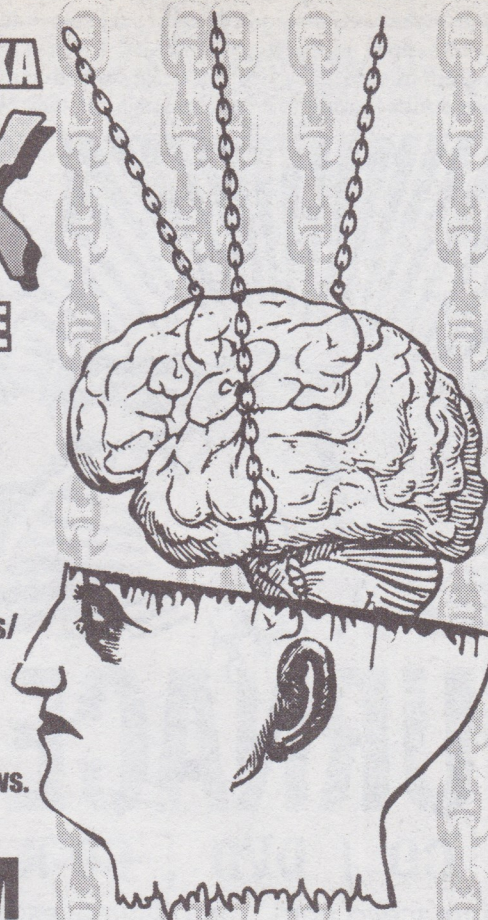
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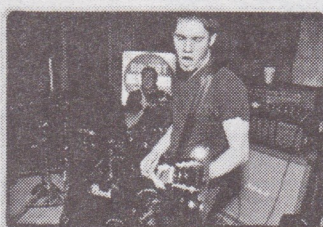
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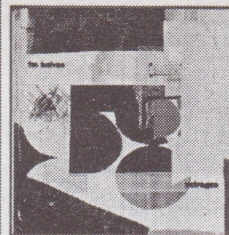


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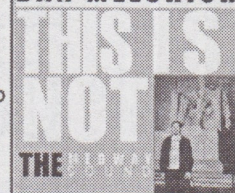
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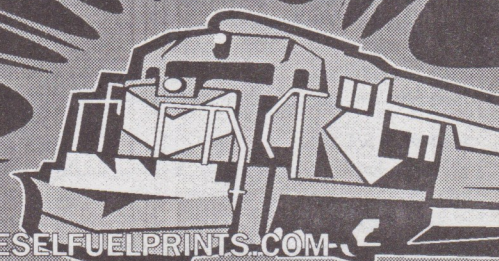
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# music

THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: Eric Action (EA), Amy Adayzie (AA), Vincent Chung (VC), Brian Czarnik (BC), Jen Dolan (JD), Art Ettinger (AE), Melissa Geils (MG), Jason Gitzlaff (JG), Tim Kuehl (TK), Dan Laidman (DAL), Bart Niedzialkowski (BN), Kyle Ryan (KR), George Sanchez (GBS), Patrick Sayers (PS), Neal Shah (NS), Dan Sinker (DS), Andy Slob (AS), Jillian Steinberger (JS), Annie Tomlin (AT)

## **Aislars Set, The – How I Learned To Write Backwards, CD**

Upon first listen, I thought I'd slipped in Belle And Sebastian's *Boy With The Arab Strap* by mistake. The Aislars must be sick of the comparison, but it's inevitable when your sound is this derivative. Still, there are worse records to play when you want a dose of indie pop. (JD)  
Suicide Squeeze Records, PO Box 80511, Seattle, WA 98108, [www.suicidesqueeze.net](http://www.suicidesqueeze.net)

## **All Night – S/T, CD**

Straight-up '70s rock that sounds like *Smokin'* era Humble Pie, Dust or a sludgier Lynyrd Skynyrd with barely an ounce of punk or modern stoner rock thrown in. Sounds like a suburban garage circa 1973. (AS)  
Tee Pee Records, PO Box 20307, New York, NY 10009-9991, [www.teepeerecords.com](http://www.teepeerecords.com)

## **All Or Nothing H.C. – Search For The Strength, CD**

All Or Nothing H.C. play a blend of early '80s South Bay hardcore and mid-'90s NYCHC. With politically charged lyrics of integrity and a mission to raise rape awareness, they've got a lot of spirit. They just need to create a more original sound. (GBS)  
On the Rag Records, PO Box 251 Norco, CA 92860, [www.ontherag.net](http://www.ontherag.net)

## **Amongst The Swarm – Crowning The Defeated, CD**

Brutally punishing metallic hardcore (minus the annoying guitar solos), this would fit nicely in between your newer Napalm Death and older Prong releases. This does what its supposed to do: punish. (AS)  
Skeptic Productions, c/o Chris Morrison, 5781 Oakland Terrace, Apt. D, Indianapolis, IN 46220

## **Anchorset – S/T, CD**

Interesting hardcore with rough, melodic vocals. The music and vocals actually remind me of the first Lifetime album a little. The music alternates between post-hardcore tempos, intricate inter-

ludes and driving melodies with enough touches of flair to satisfy Chotchkie's. Hard to categorize and better for it. (NS)

Nice Guy, PO Box 42815, Cincinnati, OH 45242-0815, [www.niceguyrecords.com](http://www.niceguyrecords.com)

## **And Spiders – In The Woods, CD**

In Chicago, there's a small tavern called the Hideout. It's tucked behind industrial buildings and barren parking lots, and the building facade is a bit dumpy. But inside, it's cozy and warm, with friendly barkeeps and a stereo that plays old-timey country. And Spiders would be right at home at the Hideout, playing their lackadaisical songs that sound plucked from a bygone era. Kelly Caldwell's slight twang brings a haunting feel to songs about wooden rocking chairs, and any band that has Fred Thomas (Flashpapr, Saturday Looks Good To Me) in it can't help but be smart. The electronic bleeps and bleeps seem misplaced with the softer country songs, but the upbeat guitar on "Bobby Dall" more than makes up for it. Added bonus: These 10 songs can be yours for only \$5. What's not to like? (AT)  
We're Twins, PO Box 7727, Ann Arbor, MI 48107, [www.weretwins.com](http://www.weretwins.com)

## **Angry For Life – S/T, CD**

Angry For Life storm the scene with their brand of straightforward, melodic hardcore. Their musicianship is ample, but the music is forgettable. Worse yet, their simplistic lyrics ("Peace and harmony/ It's just a faded dream/ This is not the '60s/ It's 1984") have inextricably ingrained themselves into my memory. (JD)  
Ancestor Records, PO Box 36131, San Jose, CA 95158, [www.ancestorrecords.com](http://www.ancestorrecords.com)

## **ANTIISEEN – Honour Among Thieves, CD**

I've never been an Antiseen fan, and after hearing this remastered rerelease of their first record, I know why. I remember hearing this on tape years

ago and disliking this awful, dirty, Southern-fried punk rock. There's a reason why this is the first time on CD—for die-hard fans only. (DM)

TKO Records, 3126 W. Cary St., #303, Richmond, VA 23221, [www.tkorecords.com](http://www.tkorecords.com)

## **ANTIISEEN – Southern Hostility, CD**

Again, TKO Records presents a rerelease of yet another essential album by the kings of southern scum rock, ANTiSEEN. Right around the time this issue hits newsstands, ANTiSEEN will play its 20th anniversary show in Charlotte, N.C. And a prolific 20 years it's been for the band, with their countless seven inches and full-lengths. Of the recent rereleases by TKO, *Southern Hostility* is probably the least necessary from the standpoint of it being one of the easier ANTiSEEN releases to find. (This is its third major pressing.) But it's considered one of the band's best albums for good reason: Here the blend of country, southern rock, and hardcore mixes especially well, and many of the band's better-known songs are showcased on this album. The anti-record-industry track "Kill The Business" and "My God Can Beat Up Your God" (one of the funniest antireligion songs in the history of punk) are especially crucial. This album is also distinguishable in that it captures the live feel of the band better than any of their other studio albums. Viva la ANTiSEEN! (AE)

TKO Records, 3216 W. Cary St., #303, Richmond, VA 23221, [www.tkorecords.com](http://www.tkorecords.com)

## **Arrivals, The – Exsenator Orange, CD**

I will not compare this band to Chicago bands of the past, even though it would be easy to do. Instead, I will say that they have a tight, pounding rhythm section overlapped with two layered guitars and vocals. All of it makes the Arrivals a band to be reckoned with. (EA)

Thick Records, PO Box 220245, Chicago, IL 60622, [www.thickrecords.com](http://www.thickrecords.com)

## **Atom & His Package – Attention! Blah Blah**



### Blah, CD

Atom, of the Atom & His Package unit, may possibly be all of these things: the most 'posi' dude ever, the unifying factor of punk scenes, the They Might Be Giants of punk rock (but *way* cooler), the originator of the hot new electropunk craze(?). Could Atom be the godfather of "Electroclash"? If so, we forgive him, because Atom (along with his faithful package—a synthesizer—and his guitar) has been delighting hordes of pop, emo, straightedge, hardcore, queerpunk, oi and ska kids for years with his goofy one-man show. He's written some of the last five years' most loved punk-rock anthems ("Punk Rock Academy," "Hats Off To Halford") and continues to produce some amazingly witty and ridiculously fun songs. For some reason, the copy I received came without a track listing (boo!), but all I need to say is that the record is evidence that Atom is perfecting his use of poppy, synthesized, danceable sounds (much akin to the Rentals) meshed with super hardcore and/or metal guitar riffage, and intelligent yet hilarious sing-along lyrics. *Attention! Blah Blah Blah* is a must-have for 2003. Atom-bashers, y'all better step down! (MG) Hopeless Records, PO Box 7495, Van Nuys, CA 91409, [www.hopelessrecords.com](http://www.hopelessrecords.com)

### Atrina - Searching For a Better Way, CD

Noisy, down-and-dirty, metal-tinged rock. Singer Kelly nails that wail/sigh brand of vocals that meld smoothly with fuzzy guitars. Although there's an apparent Slint influence, these kids are best when they drop the arty songs (promising but ill-fitting) and stick with the rock 'n' roll, hoochie koo. (AT) Self-released, <http://home.earthlink.net/~atrina/>

### Autumn Year, The - It's Better To Leave Something While You Still Love It, Than To

### Leave Something Because You Hate It, CD

A fitting title considering these guys recently broke up, leaving us with a quirky emo album full of promise that will never be realized. The haunting instrumentals consist of chaotic guitars and drumming that grow slowly into more intricate and calculated melodies, complemented well by the sparse, emotional vocals. (BN) Santos Records, 48 Main St., Ailsworth, Peterborough PE5 7AF, UK [www.santosrecords.co.uk](http://www.santosrecords.co.uk)

### Avail—Front Porch Stories, CD

Although Avail's unique brand of melodic punk with hard-core tendencies and an intense earnestness was a revelation in the mid-'90s, it's now 2003, and it feels formulaic. At least it did on *One Wrench*, their previous album, which lacked the hooks the band usually has in spades. Nothing's worse than watching a great band lurch along past its prime, and I thought Avail was becoming *that* band. Track five of *Front Porch Stories*, "Gravel To Dirt," opens with singer Tim Barry saying, "Been at this too long ... I should set sail." If I had my mind made up, I'd say that perfectly summarizes Avail in the year 2003. But I don't think that's the case. Even though the band's not exploring any new territory here, *Front Porch Stories* does have hooks in spades, with songs only Avail could execute. True, "Subdued & Arrested" is an uncharacteristically mellow song for the band, and Avail's hardcore tendencies seem to be deemphasized here. But you know what to expect with Avail, and if judged purely by that, *Front Porch Stories* is easily a success. Avail sticks to what they do best, and really, you can't blame them. Definitely recommended. (KR)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690, [www.fatwreck.com](http://www.fatwreck.com)

### Bad Luck Charms, The - Rich Girl, 7"

This two-song single is an instant classic 7" from this popular "supergroup" featuring members of The Nuns and U.S. Bombs. The Ramones and Heartbreakers heavily influenced this sound, with the snotty vocals adding a marked Dead Boys touch. Comes complete with sleazy, bad-boy lyrics. (AE) TKO Records, 3216 W. Cary St., #303, Richmond, VA 23221, [www.tkorecords.com](http://www.tkorecords.com)

### Bedford - Spaceship, Sex and Jealously: The Singles, 1995-2000, CD

The early years contained fast, unbridled, barely under control, fast as hell, poppy punk rock. As time went on, they slowed down slightly and captured pop sensibility. They're as catchy as Less Than Jake and just as witty. (DM) Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy Beds, SG 19 2WB UK, [www.bosstuneage.com](http://www.bosstuneage.com)

### Bird Gets The Smile—S/T, CDEP

Heavier melodic punk with too much of an edge to be completely poppy. The production on this makes everything a little quiet and muddy; better recording would make the nice instrumentation stand out. This isn't band, but it starts to drag by the last track. (KR)

Reason Y, PO Box 145171, Coral Gables, FL 33114, [www.reasony.com](http://www.reasony.com)

### Black Lips - S/T, 7"

Jangly garage rock along the lines of Them or The Animals. The vocals are really high and almost annoying, but the overall sound is pretty good. The record even has that authentic, tinny (crappy) sound to it. (NS)

Brand Name, PO Box 17533, Atlanta, GA 30316, [www.brandnamerecords.com](http://www.brandnamerecords.com)

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We make every attempt to review all the records we receive, as long as they are released on independent record labels. However, despite our best efforts, not every record ends up in here for a myriad of reasons. Records marked with a little ear (👂) are designated as "highlight" reviews by the reviewer. That means it's a record that really stands out for them this time around, but just because a review doesn't have an ear doesn't mean it isn't good. Finally, if a reviewer doesn't like your record, it's just one person's opinion, so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project and that alone is worth some congratulations!



🔗 **Blackout Terror, The – The Shortest Distance Between Birth and Death, CD**

Anyone who enjoys German screamo (particularly from Per Koro) will love The Blackout Terror. The music flows well despite the spastic, raging drum and guitar work—at times they're slow, calming melodies, but then they seamlessly increase speed and chaos. The lyrics are as well planned and executed as the music, jumping from topics such as the IMF, sexism in the scene, poverty vs. violence, and quitting your job to go on tour. Some of their riffs have been in my head for the past week, making it hard to get out of my CD player. Get your hands on this release, and you will see what I mean. (TK) Self-released, 4119 Gunn Hwy. #12, Tampa, FL 33624, <http://web.tampabay.rr.com/btl3>

**Blake Brown – Flicker And Fade, CD**

Haunting acoustic tracks that, at least to me, sound like Bjork doing an unplugged set covering Beck's *Sea Changes* album. (AS) Self-released, [www.blakebrown.com](http://www.blakebrown.com)

**Blau, Karl—Clothes Your I's, CD**

You kind of have to be in the mood for this mellow, singer/songwriter music with stylistic twists. The varied instrumentation (vibes, sax, flute) provide a nice accompaniment to the acoustic guitar and percussion. At times it sounds like Beck without a dance beat. Good, but weird— weird, but good. (KR) Knw-Yr-Own, 1717 Commercial Ave., Anacortes, WA 98221, [www.knw-yr-own.com](http://www.knw-yr-own.com)

🔗 **Blue Bloods – S/T, CDR**

Self-released as a CDR for now, this surprisingly distinguished mainline melodic streetpunk release is about to be released by Belgium's I Scream Records, with U.S. distribution to follow via Atlanta's GMM. The Blue Bloods hail from Boston, but stylistically sound more like a West Coast band. The vocals are primarily melody-driven, but there is more hoarseness than on most "street pop" releases, making them a more populist version of Reducers SF. I think the band has some other releases, but this is their first with real distribution and thus contains rerecordings of some of their more popular older songs. There are 18 songs in all, with no duds to speak of. There are a surprising number of "lead guitar" lines for this type of music, but they're done tastefully and never mixed high enough to be obnoxious. The bass lines

are also more complex than expected, but it doesn't sound like showboating as much as it appears that this band knows how to play. (AE) Self-released, Bluebloods, 22 Clinton Ave., Danvers, MA 01923, [www.iscreamrecords.com](http://www.iscreamrecords.com), [www.gmm-records.com](http://www.gmm-records.com)

**Boils, The – The Ripping Waters, CDEP**

Philly's The Boils are aging gracefully, keeping their scientifically perfected blend of '80s hardcore and oi raging forward into the new millennium. This brief EP is a teaser for their upcoming TKO album, which will introduce them to yet another generation of patch-wearing street punks. Boils never get old. (AE) Thorp Records, PO Box 6786, Toledo, OH 43612, [www.thorprecords.com](http://www.thorprecords.com)

**Bombshell Rocks – From Here And On, CD**

I guess these guys finally got sick of being called "the Swedish Rancid," because there's newfound urgency in the melodies, vocals and lyrics. Still catchy, the songs are more structured this time around and a whole lot more rock than punk. Maturity proved a blessing for these blokes. (BN) Epitaph Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, [www.epitaph.com](http://www.epitaph.com)

**Brazil – Dasein, CD**

Doomy and gloomy songs featuring hints of keyboard, viola, violin and cello, which should be interesting, except it isn't. Instead, *Dasein* sounds like radio-friendly modern progressive rock, with an unfortunate penchant for spoken-word stylings. Track six, though, "It Keeps The Machine Running," has hints of G'n'R's "November Rain," which redeems the record slightly. (JG) Fearless Records, 13772 Goldenwest St., #545, Westminster, CA 92683

**Brainstorm Sheen / Eric Fox – split, 7"**

It's a split, but you really wouldn't know it. Both sides are super creepy, ambient instrumental tracks. Think Throbbing Gristle through to Eno. I'm definitely saving this for the soundtrack to my most likely never-finished movie. (AS) Dunket Records, [www.dunketrecords.com](http://www.dunketrecords.com)

**Breaker Breaker – Out of Service, CDEP**

Well, that was unexpected. Given the cover art of a sunset over water and songs entitled "The Frequency" and "Midnight," I expected some slow indie rock or something. Negative. Straight-up

tight, fast hardcore. It's good and bad. Bad: No lyrics were included. Good: only one silly mosh metal breakdown. (TK) Martyr Records, PO Box 955, Harriman, NY 10926-0955, [www.martyrrecords.com](http://www.martyrrecords.com)

🔗 **Briefs / Distraction – split, 7"**

Two of the best bands out there give two unbelievable tracks that are nothing close to throwaways. The Briefs are on Interscope, but continue to release tracks on small labels. "Ain't It The Truth" is a lot more new wave and poppier than their earlier stuff, but don't be shy—this is a catchy track with the perfect speed: Fast, but you can sing along. The Distraction are lesser known and have a great full-length that is a must-have for your collection. Their track "My Way" is not a cover, but another anthem that you have to hear. These bands' snot and sneer have revived much of what I love about punk in the first place. Both bands' releases are easiest to find in the States through Dirtnap Records. Find all you can from both bands. (EA) Radio Blast Recordings, PO Box 160 308, 40566 Düsseldorf, Germany

**Bright Eyes – Lifted Or The Story Is In The Soil, Keep Your Ear to the Ground, CD**

*Lifted* sounds something like Bob-Dylan-meets-Jim-Morrison-in-purgatory. It combines Dylan's outrage at hypocrisy and seathing-wrath-of-God-tremolo vocals with Morrison's haunting mysticism and alienated paranoia. Yet, Conor Oberst sounds just like himself: a precocious young man with a lot on his mind, conveyed through unconventional song structures and singing. The album is oddly compelling. (JS) Saddle Creek, PO Box 8554, Omaha, NE 68108-0554, [www.saddle-creek.com](http://www.saddle-creek.com)

**Brokeback – Look At The Bird, CD**

Douglas McCombs of Tortoise fame returns with his third album as Brokeback. As with his other band, Brokeback has entwined jazz, rock and electronic music to create a beautifully haunting album. Most noteworthy are the tracks featuring vocals by the late Mary Hansen of Stereolab. (PS) Thrill Jockey Records, PO Box 08038, Chicago IL 60608, [www.thrilljockey.com](http://www.thrilljockey.com)

🔗 **Burnside Project – The Networks, The Circuits, The Streams, The Harmonies, CD**

This is indie-rock with an unexpectedly listenable twist. I bet if someone said, "Yeah, this CD is like, you know, indie, but with an almost ambient-elec-

**Reviewer Spotlight: Eric Action (EA)**

THE KIDS, S/T. Belgium's The Kids released their self-titled album in 1978 on Phillips. They received a lot of renewed popularity in the late '90s when many garage acts covered them, notably the great Japanese band Teengenerate, whose last single was a Kids tribute. I don't have a great story about how they changed my life or how this record turned me onto something higher and greater. The Kids simply released a few unbelievable records in the late '70s that shouldn't be ignored. "Do You Love the Nazis," "Bloody Belgium," and "Fascist Cops" are a few of the classics here. The sound is pretty typical of many of the European bands of the time, but these boys had something a little extra that keeps their songs fresh after 25 years. You will sing along after the first listen for sure. I pull their first two records out all the time when people come over, and their heads inevitably bob, and first-timers are caught singing along. You shouldn't have any trouble getting their first two records as boot-a-likes. Their second LP, *Naughty Kids*, is also essential, so pick 'em up, square. There's also a hard-to-find CD that contains both LPs and an extra track.

Lately I have been spending a lot of time revisiting the '80s punk scene, too many to list. New singles by the Briefs and Ends make me happy, and the new Distraction LP and the rerelease of the Big Boys' *Wreck Collection* are both essential.

tro slant," you'd probably laugh in their face and point to your lapel featuring the one-inch pin collection that showcases your immaculate taste. But you'll have to lend me the benefit of the doubt here. The flexibility of the keyboard, drum/beat machine and the integration of turntablism offers a completely new sound in combination to the usual indie-rock trappings of the arpeggiated guitar and melancholy vocals. In simplest terms, this is just like the stuff you're listening to now except you won't be ashamed to dance to Burnside Project. And I mean really dance, not like that thing you do at shows where you just kinda thrust your body with your head hung low looking like someone stole your puppy. (AA)

Bar None Records, PO Box 1704, Hoboken, NJ 07030, [www.bar-none.com](http://www.bar-none.com)

#### Bygones, The – Circles, CD

Brooding, bluesy, and calculated, The Bygones have borrowed a lick here and stolen a line there, thus creating something warmly familiar. Comparisons to early '70s-era Bob Dylan are bound to come, but they're not inaccurate. Bill Wagner's phrasing and ability to turn a line over, not unlike Old 97's Rhett Miller, is reminiscent of Dylan's work on *Blood On The Tracks*. The staggered blues that the rest of the band beats out is awfully reminiscent of The Band as well. At times, The Bygones delve too heavily into their obvious Grateful Dead influences, but their nostalgic contemporary feel is reminiscent of the first time I heard Uncle Tupelo. This isn't The Bygones' definitive declaration of musical identity, but in songs like "The Book," "The Old West End," and "Burgundy Eyes," you can hear that they're onto something. Even if they never find it as a band, I bet you'll hear Bill Wagner's name again down the line. (GBS)

Deraillleur Records, PO Box 10276, Columbus, OH 43201, [www.deraillleurrecords.com](http://www.deraillleurrecords.com)

#### Capitol Years – Jewelry Store, CDEP

Equal parts pop-psychedelia and rock 'n' roll with huge Beck and Beatles influences, this EP is chock full of hooks, melodies and harmonizing (and I swear the song "Lucky Strike" is entirely based around a Strokes riff). Perfect for pop fans. (MG)

Full Frame Records, PO Box 2562, San Francisco, CA 94126, [www.fullframerecords.com](http://www.fullframerecords.com)

#### Reviewer Spotlight: Amy Adoyzie (AA)

BRAN VAN 3000, *Glee*. Their name sounds like the title of some retro-ironic sci-fi film, but instead it's a Montreal-based collective of musicians with James Di Salvio as the wizard behind the curtain. In the mid-'90s, BV3 pioneered a genre that has been bastardized on college radio stations everywhere. It's the other-worldly sound of electro-club dance beats, heavy metal guitar riffs, hip-hop delivery, punk rock pop sensibility, folksy storytelling, sound bytes galore, and even a bit of disco orbiting around their own dimension. On their planet, rock candy for your ear is plentiful, as they've got the sweetest Beach Boy-esque harmonies. This is not to mention the almost seamlessly interwoven socio-political messages throughout the record. "Drinking In L.A.," their popular first single, could be mistaken for an anthem endorsing inebriation, but it's actually an indictment of the apathy induced by it. But it's the shake-ass-ability of this disc that keeps 'em coming with "Cum on Feel The Noise" and "Exactly Like Me," to name a few. Both of my favorite tracks log in under two minutes. "Problems," is about the notions of entitlement and how to kick ass with ownership. "Mama Don't Smoke," with the lines, "Mama don't smoke that much dope/ don't you worry about me/ I only get high about twice a day/ it helps to keep my blues away," sung so tenderly it'd convince straight-edgers to light up. Now, how can you go wrong with that?

**You betta get down from your waist down:** Elvis Costello, *My Aim is True*; Jurassic 5, *Power in Numbers*; Dead Kennedys, *Give Me Convenience Or Give Me Death*; Washington Generals, *G28*; and Mister Owlie, *Aardvarks And 'Nspeshuns*.

#### Cashell, Kathy – Rare Animal Zoo, CD

This acoustic-guitar-driven debut by the singer/guitarist of DC-area band Cry Baby Cry might be called "chick-folk emo-lite." The music sounds sincere, but not *too* heavy. Those who appreciate Ani DiFranco's slower numbers or Jenny Toomey may enjoy this. The packaging is simply gorgeous in a recycled kind of way. (JS)

Exotic Fever Records, PO Box 297, College Park, MD 20741-0297, [www.kathycashell.com](http://www.kathycashell.com)

#### Cerebral Noize – Process, CD

From the band name and looks of this CD, I was expecting some kind of funk-metal band. But this is equally enjoyable. (That's a good thing.) These guys have the nerdy, goth-punk/metal market cornered. Actually, I think it's just one person's project with various contributors. The musicianship is excellent, almost too much so for punk, but I guess that's when it crosses over into the more metal territory. Predominantly male vocals, but there are some gothic female backing vocals at times. The lyrics deal with computers, the fall of real metal, philosophy and sci-fi books or something. I'm not sure what to say about this CD other than it's really weird and talented metal. I would have guessed this is from somewhere in Europe instead of Washington. If you like goofy metal, check this out. (NS)

Cale Burr, 3750 139th Place SE, Bellevue, WA 98006, [www.cerebralnoize.com](http://www.cerebralnoize.com)

#### Cho Experiment – S/T, CD

Wiry, geeky weirdness. Herky-jerky outer-space explosions. Drums and guitars and electronic gadgetry. Bleeps and bleeps. Broadway-styled singing. Sound-effects mania. Grinding noise blasts. Creepy, whispering sagas. Sixteen tracks of all-around craziness. (MG)

Self-released, [www.choexperiment.com](http://www.choexperiment.com)

#### Civil Duty – Shit And Piss EP, 7"

Gee, a punk band that called their EP *Shit And Piss*. I wonder what it could sound like? Fuck the system and get this record. See, I am still punk rock! (BC)

Violent Reaction Records, PO Box 902, Artesia, CA 90702-0902

#### Clyde Federal – Please Be Real, CDEP

The six tracks on this CD jangle and shimmer with a reverence to REM, but maintain a more straightforward lyrical style. Good stuff for those who can get by without distortion and want to feel a sense of happiness. (AS)

Leaf Shield Records, 1720 W. Ellen #1, Chicago, IL 60622, [www.clydefederal.com](http://www.clydefederal.com)

#### Coffinberry – S/T, 7"

This goofy, surf- and mod-influenced collegiate rock band's single hails from the great city of Cleveland. Maybe if Cleveland opened a Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Shame, this band would have a place in the world. Not campy enough to be funny, this record is just plain painful. (AE)

Exit stencil Recordings, PO Box 110775, Cleveland, OH 44111, [www.exitstencilrecordings.com](http://www.exitstencilrecordings.com)

#### Coheed And Cambria – The Second Stage Turbine Blade, CD

Technically sound, this band has a lot of good buzz around it (note the fly on the cover art), and it's well-deserved. They have a ton of cool musical elements thrown in as well as a singer who hits the high notes with force. (BC)

Equal Vision Records, PO Box 14, Hudson, NY 12534, [www.equalvision.com](http://www.equalvision.com)

#### Count The Stars – Never Be Taken Alive, CD

Count The Stars are the punk equivalent of a boy band, and it would shock me if these guys don't have a hit video by the end of 2003. Decadent, stupid, and cutesy, Count The Stars nonetheless got even this thug-music lover swaying to and fro like a crying teenager at an Elvis concert. They're still playing shows on the underground circuit, but that won't last long as they're headed right to superstardom. Each of these 13 songs is remarkable in its simplicity and infectiousness, so much so that you'll be singing along *the first fucking time you hear them!* This CD has an underlying aggressiveness not normally heard in pop music, so buy it for your younger sister or brother and reel 'em in to punk. (AE)

Victory Records, 346 North Justine, Ste 504, Chicago, IL 60607, [www.victoryrecords.com](http://www.victoryrecords.com)

#### Crepe Blush – Basket Of Bets, CDEP

Electroclash hopefuls embark on a five-song synthesized journey in time. From the wondrous glory days of '80s electro (Tubeway Army, Human League, Kraftwerk) to the uber-hip '80s-with-a-twist revival of the 21st century (Peaches, The Faint, Miss Kitten), these ladies take from it all and have the fashion to boot. Drum machines produce dance-floor beats underneath layers of slow, synthesized swirls of meth-addled fury. They even do a



crooked fingers / devil makes three, the

very worthy and impressive cover of Giorgio Moroder's complicated, nonvocal new wave staple "Manhattan Express." This four-song introduction to Creme Blush is perfect for all the '80s-at-heart, new-wave-lovin' kids and/or fashionable electro-trashy folk. (MG)  
Self-released, 103 Essex St., Suite 4F, New York, NY 10002, [www.iluvcremeblush.com](http://www.iluvcremeblush.com)

#### 9 Crooked Fingers – Red Devil Dawn, CD

Crooked Fingers is Eric Bachmann's new project. Some of you may remember Eric from his former, much-beloved band, Archers Of Loaf. *Red Devil Dawn* might surprise Archers fans, as the songs here are atmospheric and sometimes ambient-sounding pop with a folksy feel. There is some vast instrumentation going on as well: Guitar, lap steel, trumpet, violin, cello, and mandolin are just a few of the instruments used on the record. At the very least, Archers fans should pick this up to hear the vocals. Bachmann has a great, unmistakable voice that reminds me of both Tom Waits and David Bowie. This really is a beautiful record, and I bet it will make more than a few "Top Ten" lists this year. (KM)  
Merge Records, PO Box 1235, Chapel Hill, NC 27514, [www.mergerecords.com](http://www.mergerecords.com)

#### Cunts, The – La La La, CD

Chicago's Cunts sound like early '80s pop-punk mixed with psychedelic three-chord garage rock. Mystical guitar lines combine with raw, ragged vocals and driving drumbeats, reminiscent of the Thirteenth Floor Elevators. The Cunts have released five albums to date, including a compilation of recordings from '78-'88. These Cunts have been around! (JS)  
Disturbed Record Products, 3238 S. Racine, Chicago, IL 60608

#### Curse, The – S/T, CD

When Kid Dynamite's cremated ashes were flushed down Dave Wagenschutzhdkasdhfd's toilet, their cooties must have contaminated Philly's water supply. The Curse fill the void with a similar-sounding EP. Fast and heavy with a dash that "melodic post-hardcore punk," this release fulfills any desire for solid, aggressive, high-octane punk. (VC)  
Hell Bent Records, PO Box 1529, Point Pleasant Beach, NJ 03742

#### 9 Cursive—The Ugly Organ, CD

This record *destroys*: jarring, passionate, complex, dissonant, bizarre. The onesheet calls it an "operetta of sexual and emotional confusion and

conflict set to a musical backdrop." That may sound like bullshit, but the record's theatrics do make it sound like the score to an elaborate stage production. Consequently, it's Cursive's most over-the-top ambitious release to date. The songs are layered like crazy: noise (both quiet and dizzying), cello (especially present on this record), dueling vocals, thunderous drums, noisy intros and outros (see track one and the end of "Harold Weathervein"), interesting production choices (distorted drums at the beginning "Bloody Murderer"), more things than I can name here. When Cursive's using everything in their arsenal, they render pedantic the music you once considered "progressive" postpunk. Lyrically, the record is an intense analysis of the touring band lifestyle: emotional catharsis as commodity, desperate hook-ups, the superficiality of the scene, etc., all of it unsettling. Even the ethereal coda that ends the epic 10-minute last track, a group chorus singing "the worst is over," doesn't let you feel comfortable. It weans you from the record's intensity gently, but leaves you exhausted. *The Ugly Organ* is incredibly impressive. (KR)  
Saddle Creek Records, PO Box 8554, Omaha, NE, 68108-8554, [www.saddle-creek.com](http://www.saddle-creek.com)

#### Damage Control – Can't Keep Us Down, CD

Pick-slide city! Norway's Damage Control plays some of the best straight-edge hardcore I've heard in a long time. Short, fast, loud and melodic. They may not have reinvented the X, but they've certainly made it worth listening to one more time. (PS)  
Crucial Response Records, Kaiserfeld 98, 46047 Oberhausen, Germany, [www.crucialresponse.com](http://www.crucialresponse.com)

#### 9 Dawn Treader – S/T, CDEP

Some people call it "screamo," but I call it "the way emo should be." And this band knows how to do it right. Dawn Treader have mastered the gripping emotional intensity of music (think Saetia, Orchid, or True North). They delicately balance their song structures with highly charged, screaming-for-dear-life parts and haunting, melodic interludes backed by a piano and cello. "Roller Coaster In A Theme Park" is a whopping seven-minute-long track, and the proficiency of instrumentation, intermingling speeds, and forceful vocals keep the song interesting and powerful. It's hard to play "screamo" that deviates from the norm, but the odd mishmash of fast-paced and calm, deafening and quiet, pull with each other rather than against, and it feels damn good. I ache. I cry. I recommend. (MG)

Robot Winter Records, 220 Fourth St. NW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52405, [www.robotwinter.com](http://www.robotwinter.com)

#### Death From Above – Heads Up, CDEP

Treble emanating from the guitar, constantly crashing cymbals, annoying sound effects—this six-song blast is either the best disc for getting back at your bass-thumping neighbors or a work of genius. You need to decide for yourself. (EA)  
Ache Records, PO Box 138, 1001 W. Broadway, #101, Vancouver BC, V6H 4E4, Canada, [www.acherecords.com](http://www.acherecords.com)

#### Death In Custody – S/T, CDEP

What we have here are four songs of Detroit old-school hardcore with political lyrics. Fast-paced and furious, it doesn't really stand out. (KM)  
Self-released, 1131 W. Warren, Suite 314, Detroit, MI 48201, [deathincustody@hotmail.com](mailto:deathincustody@hotmail.com)

#### Death Or Glory – Your Choice, CDEP

This is an excellent 11-track EP of German youth-crew hardcore. These guys sound like many bands from Long Island and the like, but this is a tighter and punchier EP than most, and the humble lyrics emphasize fact that straight hardcore is still relevant. (AE)  
Crucial Response Records, Kaiserfeld 98, 46047, Oberhausen, Germany, [www.crucialresponse.com](http://www.crucialresponse.com)

#### 9 Devil Makes Three, The – S/T, CD

There has gotta be something in the water down in Santa Cruz. To create Extreme Elvis' backing band, Hate Mail Express, and now The Devil Makes Three—someone must be slipping the ashes of Doc Boggs into the H<sub>2</sub>O supply. Ten juke-joint blues that echo traces of western swing ("Shades") and channel the ghost of Henry Thomas ("Beneath the Piano"). This acoustic trio bridge different musical eras without the camp common in nostalgic sounds, nor do they coast on clichés. The approach is simple and straight forward: two guitars, one stand-up bass, and three voices. Pete Bernhard and Cooper McBean's chorus harmony on "The Bullet" rolls smooth and natural, proving sometimes it's not what you say, but how you say it. The finale, "For My Family," is a bit hippie and exemplary of their Santa Cruz roots, what with shout outs to the fam and all, and realistically should've been kept off this recording. Soulful roots music instead of 10 carefully calculated reproductions of the past, The Devil Makes Three is a deviant middle finger to all Johnny-come-lately bluegrass listeners. (GBS)

#### Reviewer Spotlight: Vincent Chung (VC)

MAXIMILIAN COLBY, *Discography*. Right at the hump of the '90s, Richmond, Va., seemed like the place to be. Bands like Avail and Action Patrol were bludgeoning a new brand of punk and putting their scene on the map. Among these peers was the incredibly brilliant Maximilian Colby. Before "screamo" knew it existed, the often overlooked, but not yet forgotten Max Colby were pounding out their meticulously tightly wound discordant noise to unsuspecting basement crowds. Bands today carry the sound in short, scathing bursts of chaotic noise (played by wimpy white kids having temper tantrums), but Max Colby mastered sharp control, stop/start tempos, and polarizing dynamics. Max Colby came to me via my first mixtape, bookmarking a place between Assfactor 4 and Moss Icon. "Last Name" reversed itself over and over again in my Walkman while riding the yellow bus to and from school every day. The discography covers their unfortunately brief existence, cut short when the bassist suddenly died, forcing a deep wound into his peers—and marking the title of Avail's 4 A.M. *Friday* and the song "F.C.A." The band went on with ex-members forming The Sleepytime Trio, who were more refined and popular, but just as brief. (VC)

**Five things I love that you might too!** Anti-pop Consortium, *Arrhythmia*; The Children's Hour EP; This Heat Peel Sessions; Black Eyes 7"; Curtis Mayfield, *Curtis*.

Monkeywrench Productions, PO Box 1413 Santa Cruz, CA 95060, [www.monkeywrenchproductions.com](http://www.monkeywrenchproductions.com)

#### DiFranco, Ani – *Evolve*, CD

It's too jazzy-fusion-y for me (although I admit to digging the *Shaft*-type sounds). But some people are "into" jazz-fusion, and they also love Ani. If you love Ani, you'll likely love this well-produced, nicely crafted release, produced by the powerful lady herself. (But most of her band are guys! Hmmmf.) (JS)

Righteous Babe Records, PO Box Ellicott Station, Buffalo, NY 14205, [www.righteousbabe.com](http://www.righteousbabe.com)

#### Dirty Three – *She Has No Strings* Apollo, CD

Very somber instrumental music filled with pianos and violin. Unlike the fawning press-release reviews, I can't get into this. "Ambient folk music?" Does that appeal to people? "Orchestral, antiquated textures?" Do people really write that? If you revel in depression, check this out. (NS) Touch & Go, PO Box 25520, Chicago, IL 60625

#### Douglass Kings—*Three Bucks*, CDEP

Hell yeah, the Douglass Kings were guitar-and-drums-only before it was cool. With a rough, very Fuel-esque vocal style and a kind of noodley, Fugazi/Husker Du guitar style, they blend some of the best elements of those bands, strip them down and make the result all their own. Get this. (KR) Evil Owl Records, 10344 Mississippi Blvd., Coon Rapids, MN 55433, [www.evillowrecords.com](http://www.evillowrecords.com)

#### Dreams Die First – *Neverending Daylight*, CDEP

Dreams Die First play melodic, alt-rock-sounding tunes with jangly guitars and very, very emotive vocals. This is the type of music that MTV's *120 Minutes* played in the mid-'90s. The lyrics on this release range from the romanticization of alcoholism to some good ol' fashioned self-depreciation. (KM)

For Documentation Only, 5140 Crayton Place S., Naples, FL 34103, [www.fordocumentationonly.com](http://www.fordocumentationonly.com)

#### Drive Like Jehu—*Yank Crime+3*, CD

The reissue people of the year, this record has all of 1994's ear-splittingly intense *Yank Crime* plus three songs: "Bullet Train To Vegas" and "Hand Over Fist" (both from a 7" on Merge) and the original version of "Sinews," which appeared on a comp. It's a record to be celebrated. (KR) Swami Records, PO Box 620428, San Diego, CA 92162, [www.swamirecords.com](http://www.swamirecords.com)

#### Reviewer Spotlight: Brian Czarnik (BC)

HOT GLUE GUN. Illinois kicks ass! We have all the great Chicago bands, and then a couple of hours down the road to the college town of Champaign are even more great bands. Champaign was the best college town ever: cute girls, bad gas-station food, frats, great record stores. Every time I played there, I made sure I had the time of my life. In the early '90s, the best Champaign band (besides the Poster Children) was Hot Glue Gun. They brought alternative rock to a town that was stuck in classic rock. On their first full 7" (I think they did a split before this one) from 1991, they kicked some serious rock ass. On side one, you had the great, rhythmic classic "I'll Kill You" and "Houseboat." Side two picks up with the college-party hit "Torpedo," then closes with the dreamy "She Calms Down." At one time, these three guys were gods to Champaign's unpopular alternative kids. They deserved to become big stars, but in this world, all the good bands seem to get thrown by the wayside. To my knowledge, they recorded another 7", then that was it. Trust me: Hunt this sucker down on eBay, and you will find yourself singing along to all four tunes. This is something everyone who likes his/her rock with a little twist will love! They got funky without sounding like a bad Chili Peppers song, and they were aggressive without sounding fake. Man, I miss this band.

**Five best bands this time:** Coheed And Cambria, Life Of Pi, Woolworthy, Pivot, and of course, The Stiffed.

#### Drop Science, The – *Dies Tonight*, CD

Tightly played math rock that comes close to the odd-ball riffage of bands like Shellac, whose bass player recorded this album. It's just that, from my perspective, it lacks Shellac's abrasive sound, vocals, and wit. (AS) Happy Couples Never Last Records, PO Box 36997, Indianapolis, IN 46236, [www.hcnl.com](http://www.hcnl.com)

#### Drunken War / Girlush Figure - split, 7"

Drunken War from Ithaca play excellent '90s street-punk, very much akin to August Spies (see my spotlight). Their side is essential, unlike Girlush Figure's. Girlush Figure is a likable band that generally plays solid, straightforward punk, but here they supply a strange slow song that just doesn't work. (AE) Self-released, [www.drunkenwar.com](http://www.drunkenwar.com), [www.girlushfigure.tripod.com](http://www.girlushfigure.tripod.com)

#### Dying Midwestern – *This Killing Me Is Over*, CD

Straight-ahead, four-on-the-floor rock 'n' roll. Lots of guitar in the mix, and some scratchy, angst-filled vocals help drive the music away from being just another pop-punk band. Very good stuff. (BC) Evil Owl Records, 10344 Mississippi Blvd., Coon Rapids, MN 55433, [www.evillowrecords.com](http://www.evillowrecords.com)

#### Dynamite Club – *The Legend Of Tiger Mask*, CD

This record makes me laugh. Self-proclaimed "retard-core," Dynamite Club plays a mish-mash of just about every different style you can imagine. Very experimental stuff influenced by everything from jazz and rock to country and punk. The vocals sound like they're trying to imitate animal and machine sounds. Weird. (KM) Big Sleep Records, PO Box 110066 Nutley, NJ 07110, [www.bigsleeprecords.com](http://www.bigsleeprecords.com)

#### Edgewise – *Complete Discography*, CD

What you've been waiting for: all of Edgewise's releases available on one CD! They were actually pretty good in the realm of heavy, metallic hardcore. These guys show that it's not just old-school hardcore that's been done better. Fans of tough-guy hardcore and metal, here's your history lesson. (NS) Thorp, PO Box 6786, Toledo, OH 43612, [www.thorprecords.com](http://www.thorprecords.com)

#### Emok – *Crumbs*, CDEP

Israeli expatriates produce pounding, raging music that at times reminds one of a heavier Jane's Addiction, but should be very pleasing to any Rage Against The Machine fan. (AS) Spaff Records, [www.emok.net](http://www.emok.net)

#### Encyclopedia Of American Traitors – *Discography*, CD

An Italian release that is an equal parts thrashy Hellnation as it is the latest violent screamo hardcore band. It says it's a comp of previous material, and it is politically charged and damn brutal. There's even a weird cover of Sabbath's "Paranoid." (AS) Shove, Manuel Piacenza vie Don Minzoni 3 15100 Alessandria, Italy

#### Evergreen Terrace – *Buried Alive By Time*, CD

Evergreen Terrace plays the heavy-as-hell, emo-influenced hardcore/metal sound that is (was?) ever so popular. The guitars go chugga-chugga, the vocalist growls, and then the band gets all pretty on you with some melodic breaks. I can see Poison The Well fans getting into this. (KM) Eulogy Records, PO Box 8692 Coral Springs, FL 33075, [www.eulogyrecordings.com](http://www.eulogyrecordings.com)

#### Exit, The—*New Beat*, CD

Intense pop punk that manages to avoid pop-punk clichés. The Exit's excellent melodies are buttressed by interesting arrangements, giving them an edge over blander bands. Even though the super-reverbed, slightly delayed guitar effect they use in tracks three, five, seven and 11 is almost comically redundant, this is good. (KR) Some Records, 51 Macdougall St., #458, New York, NY 10012, [www.some.com](http://www.some.com)

#### Exploding Hearts – *(Making) Teenage Faces*, 7"

Great two-track killer from one of the best up-and-coming bands of late. The Exploding Hearts have good taste in music, stealing form Cheap Trick, The Boys, and Lurkers to name a few. Listen, everything has been done to death, and the Exploding Hearts are doing power pop dance with the best of 'em. The A-Side, "(Making) Teenage Faces" is new wave/power pop excellence. Their debut LP, released overseas, will be out on Dirtnap by the time you read this, and you will want to pick that up as well. In the days of the dying single, it is nice to know that I can still get excited by listening to a record over and over. The Exploding Hearts, not a keyboard band like many of their contemporaries (Spits, Epoxies, etc.), created a modern gem in this release. (EA) Vinyl Warning, PO Box 2991, Portland, OR 97208-2991, [www.explodinghearts.com](http://www.explodinghearts.com)



### 9 Extras – Ugly American, CD

Wow! I thought there was nothing good in my box this issue until I came across the Extras. I hoped it was the same band that did "This Generation Doesn't Judge" off the old *Hudson Rock* compilation. In fact it was the same band, playing 16 tracks of great early-'80s punk rock that rolls with the best slope there ever was. The early '80s are just being unearthed as a second coming of the mid-'60s, where every band recorded a demo in their basement, garage, or local studio. I am not a big Killed By Death collector, but I am sure that the Extras should be on one of those comps. The singer was sent to jail for finding and selling \$12 of drugs after being set-up, which ended the Extras. The story is a good read, and this release on the small Last Vestige Music label provides great product from all angles. They are even courteous enough to put silence before the last, slightly obscene, track, so you can turn it off before your kiddies hear it. Now that is funny. Highly recommended for fans of the sound that existed between '77 punk and new wave. (EA) Last Vestige Music, 173 Quail St., Albany, NY 12203, [www.lastvestige.com](http://www.lastvestige.com)

### Extra Glenns, The – Marshall Arts Weekend, CD

The Mountain Goats' John Darnielle's passionate yet pure, crisp, bell-like tenor and strummy melodies combine with long-time collaborator Franklin Bruno's clever instrumentation and tune-ful piano. The result is transcendent: an album of exquisite, poignant, unforgettable songs with poetic and emotional resonance. This is the Extra Glenn's first album. More, please. (JS) Absolutely Kosher, 1412 10th St., Berkeley, CA 94710, [www.absolutelykosher.com](http://www.absolutelykosher.com)

### 9 Fablefactory – Freak Out Hard On You, CD

Fablefactory are all over the place with an innocent pop sound in their sophomore effort. It isn't too often that a band keeps me interested through its whole record. Fablefactory definitely heard the Kinks, They Might Be Giants, and some XTC in the early brain-developing stages. Additional instruments such as strings, keyboards, and back-up singers give a depth that makes this stand out. I am a complete sucker for bands that write good songs. Ever hear the Figgs? If so, then Fablefactory will show you a good time as well. Not punk enough for your younger brother, but your uncle will be

excited that '60s pop is still being created like when he was a kid. Take a chance on a band you haven't heard before, and give this Athens band a try. (EA) Happy Happy Birthday To Me Records, PO Box 1035, Panama City, FL 32402, [www.hhbtm.com](http://www.hhbtm.com)

### Fat Day – Poop EP, 7"

If Tristan Tarzan fronted the Minutemen, that would be something crazy, but since neither Tarzan nor D. Boon is rising from the dead any time soon, Fat Day will have to suffice. Ten breakneck tunes in easily less than 10 minutes; it's an abrasive free punk/jazz/happening frenzy. (GBS) 100% breakfast! Records, PO Box 381804, Cambridge, MA 02238

### Feud, The – Language Is Technology, CD

This CD pops with finely crafted guitars, precise drumbeats, and the occasional spinning guiro. But just when you think you've got The Feud figured as a sort of math-rock outfit, they jump on a metal vibe, and you're all like, "Dude, that's neat!" Downright blissful album for angry folks. (SP) Insidious Plot Audio, 412 E. 112th St., Suite 2RB, New York, NY, 10009, [www.insidiousplot.com](http://www.insidiousplot.com)

### Fictional Girlfriend – S/T, CD

Three simple, midtempo rock 'n' roll tunes from Cincinnati. The vocals sound like an off-key Buddy Holly on downers. Good thing it was only three songs. Like so many bands out there, all this band might need is to increase their intensity and speed things up a tad. (BC) Self-released, [fictionalboy27@hotmail.com](mailto:fictionalboy27@hotmail.com)

### First Step, The – Open Hearts And Clear Minds, CD

Passionate, straight-edge hardcore that sounds like most other passionate, straight-edge hardcore bands. I can appreciate the lyrics and their sincerity, but it still comes across as a little generic. And what's with the blatant Insted rip-off on song six? (NS) Livewire, PO Box 007, Mendham, NJ 07945, [www.livewire-records.com](http://www.livewire-records.com)

### 5 Days Ahead – As Life Passes You By..., CD

5 Days Ahead have that melodic, poppy-hardcore sound that could easily find them on tour with bands of the Vagrant Records persuasion. Upbeat songs with crunchy guitars, one vocalist that sings pretty and another one that occasionally screams. (KM) PumpkinEater Records, PO Box 144 Iselin, NJ 08830, [www.pumpkineaterrecords.com](http://www.pumpkineaterrecords.com)

### Flashlight Brown – All That Glitters Is Mold, CD

These three tunes showcase one of Canada's best rock bands. This band was heading for big things as they went into the studio with Rob Cavallo (Green Day, Goo Goo Dolls, etc.), so they really don't need some jackass small-time reviewer like me now telling people how good they sound. (BC) Double A Records, [www.flashlightbrown.com](http://www.flashlightbrown.com)

### Flying Dutchmen, The – Live Devil's Club, 7"

This four-song 7" is garage rock at its finest. With sneering vocals and poppy percussion lines, this is pure dance-floor magic. Rock 'n' roll a-go-go! (JG) Boom Boom Record Company, 20720 Southeast 192 St., Renton, WA 98058

### FM Knives – Promotional Device, 7"

Well for those of you who still have a turntable (like me), then you will want to get this. Four very cool surf-type punk songs from Sacramento. (BC) Smartguy Records, 3288 21st St., PMB # 32, San Francisco, CA 94110, [www.smartguyrecords.com](http://www.smartguyrecords.com)

### Froms, The – Icarus, CD

This much talked about indie-pop sensation is back. They mix a ton of dreamy, emo-like elements in their music, and it never gets too boring thanks to Steve Albini tweaking the knobs. And this has to be the most elaborate packing I have seen in a long time. (BC) Three Spheres Records, PO Box 349, Brooklyn, NY 11222, [www.threespheres.com](http://www.threespheres.com)

### Garrison—The Model, CDEP

Garrison have shifted direction somewhat. Their other stuff has been emo-tinged, noisy postpunk, but this is a lot more melodic, even poppy—really similar to *Static Previews*-era Jimmy Eat World. Like the onesheet says, the sound is a familiar one. Consequently, it's good, not great—intense and catchy, but unremarkable. (KR) Iodine Recordings, 1085 Commonwealth Ave., PMB 318, Boston, MA 02215, [www.iodinerecordings.com](http://www.iodinerecordings.com)

### Garth Steel Klippert – Suisol, CD

GSK (what he calls himself throughout the record) is adult contemporary mom-and-dad rock. A taste of Little Feat, a little Grateful Dead, a dash of Kenny G., and all smooth. (JG) Broke 494 Cheney Ave., #2, Oakland, CA 94610

### Reviewer Spotlight: Jen Dolan (JD)

THE SOFTIES, *Winter Pageant*. Back in the days when my record collection was dominated by the punk-rock equivalent of the boy band—East Bay power pop punk, of course—I stumbled into a show at the local university. Happenstance led me to discover Tiger Trap, an all-girl band chock full of pop sensibility, who was touring in support of their only full-length release. Tiger Trap broke up shortly after that tour, but Rose Melberg, unquestionably the heart of the band, became involved in several new projects. She started The Softies with Jen Sbragia in the mid-'90s. The duo released two CDs of sweet, folk songs about love and loss before releasing their definitive recording, *Winter Pageant*, in 1996. Beautifully produced, the 14 tracks on the record shimmer from start to finish. The warm, full guitar sounds generated by both Rose and Jen provide the undercurrent for their plaintive, romantic lyrics. I first fell in love with this record because of Rose's ability to sing the saddest, most heartbreaking songs in the sweetest, most effortless manner ("Pack Your Things And Go," for example). As I listen to the record now, I gravitate to the songs where the girls find themselves in love and "everything's excellent" ("Excellent"), believing all the while that ultimately, the bad times only serve to make the good times feel that much better.

**Current obsessions:** Ted Leo & The Pharmacists, *Hearts of Oak*; Rainer Maria, *Long Knives Drawn*; Sigur Ros, (); The Postal Service, *Give Up*; Papa M, *Whatever, Mortal*; "Are You Too Late For The Trend?" weekly radio show (listen at [www.kuci.org/chrisz](http://www.kuci.org/chrisz)).

**Genetiks, The – S/T, CDR**

OK, so you're totally fucked up on booze and Quaaludes, walking through an endless, smoky bar full of badass rockers like yourself, wondering what the hell is going on. This German band provides the soundtrack: sludgy, slowed down rock 'n' roll reminding me of a less psychotic Cramps. (MG) No label or contact information provided.

**Girlband – Rock For Beginners, CD**

Don't let the name mislead you: Girlband is actually three guys playing snotty pop-punk a la early Green Day. Short bursts of hardcore energy and a sense of humor distinguish them from the pop-punk masses. What they lack in originality they make up for in exuberance. (BN) Indiestry Standard Recordings, 1128 Fourth St., Apt. 3B, Charleston, IL 61920

**Girls, The – 5.17.79 Live At The Rathskeller, CD**

Boston's answer to Devo, this art-punk band was a favorite of many '80s art rockers. Now they dusted off one of their performances and remixed it for your listening pleasure. (BC) Abaton Book Company, www.abatonbookcompany.com

**Gold Circles - Abuse The Magic, CD**

Dissonant metal-lite. Fuzzy, sludgy guitars rumble under vocals that can get a little sing-songy and whiny. "Another Heaven" has a good intro, but the rest of the songs suffer from soundlike syndrome. It's the type of music Clear Channel deems 'edgy.' (AT) Copter Crash, PO Box 6095, Hudson, FL, 34667, www.coptercrash.com

**Golden Ticket, The - Blue's The New Black, 12"**

This Seattle four-piece plays driving, fierce, and mildly poppy post-hardcore. It's too abrasive to be emo, but not hard enough to be hardcore. The female vocals are full and throaty, adding depth to the mix. Is this essential? No. Is it a pleasant surprise in my stack? Yep. (AT) Aerodrome, 1521 26th Ave., Seattle, WA 98122, aro@ero.com

**Golightly, Holly—Pretty Good Love, 7"**

I guess this is "roots rock": bluesy, insurgent-countryish rock as it was played in the early days (like a less country Neko Case). The songs use minimal instrumentation and simple beats with the guitar following blues progressions—all of it with a decidedly lo-fi sound. Definitely recommended. (KR) SmartGuy Records, 3288 21st St., #32, San Francisco, CA 94110, smartguyrecords.com

**Reviewer Spotlight: Melissa Geils (MG)**

**SPITBOY, *True Self Revealed*.** One of Ebullition's finest releases of all time, this is also one of my all-time favorite records in general. Four women playing some of the most in-your-face, politically and socially charged hardcore is just what I needed when the inherent "girliness" of the Riot Grrrl movement wasn't sitting pretty with me anymore. I wanted something that was tough and "balls out" but didn't adhere to the old male-dominated hardcore constructions. Spitboy created their own niche in punk rock by playing gruff, thick, crusty and obscenely loud midtempo hardcore that didn't fit in with the typical hardcore sound or the often cutesy Riot Grrrls. They were primal, screaming, dirty, pissed, and really on the move to educate and provoke change. They were also one of the most motivating and inspiring bands that I had ever encountered. Feminist issues were thoughtfully explored in the songs on this record, covering abortion rights ("Right"), sexual commoditization and exploitation in the media ("In Your Face"), isolation and depression ("Isolation Burns"), and harassment ("Violent Tongue"). Spitboy lifted me out of my "I don't wanna be girly" phase by being more riotous than I could've imagined a "girl band" to be.

**Records that have been glued to my turntable as of late:** Nick Cave, *Nocturama*; Ted Leo And The Pharmacists, *Hearts Of Oak*; Baxter, *Discography*; 23 Skidoo, *The Gospel Comes To New Guinea*; The Rogers Sisters, *Purely Evil*.

**Goochers, The – S/T, CDR**

The funniest lyrics from a four-piece garage outfit I've ever come across. On top of the thick fuzz-tone guitars and solid garage beat, Sheela cracks on newspaper columnists, scenesters, Weezer fans, and boys with not-so-cute girlfriends. Think the Belltones with a sense of humor. (GBS) Self-released, goochersrock@yahoo.com

**Good Clean Fun – Positively Positive 1997-2002, CD**

Just as title alludes, this is the GCF discography. It was released by Equal Vision due to the difficulty of finding certain releases on smaller labels, but it's all here—all the posi-core you can take on one handy compact disc and then some. I am not normally a sXe hardcore fan, but this is so far from the tough-guy mentality shit. They even take time to joke about it. Good Clean Fun has become an institution in hardcore history—and in my CD player. Throw this in the record player before you leave the house in the morning, and you are sure to have a positive day. (TK) Equal Vision Records, PO Box 14 Hudson, NY 12534, www.equalvision.com

**Good For You - More Time Than You're Worth, CD**

The opposite of tough-guy music, this is euro-pop played by non-Europeans in thrift-store sweaters. I like the underlying angst brewing beneath the singer's weepy vocals, and the songs are structured interestingly with uncommonly developed bridges between the verses. This is a fine CD overall, worth picking up. (AE) Self-released, Good For You, 1010 Grande Ln., Kernesville, NC 27284, www.goodforyoumusic.com

**Goons – Live At The Black Cat, CD**

This was the '80s hardcore sound that I don't remember fondly: cymbals accenting the end of every line, the singer looking for a response to his call. Live set taken from the Black Cat in Washington, D.C. If you were there at the show to see the Varukers, then you might want this enhanced CD. (EA) Self-released, PO Box 5648 Arlington, VA 22205, www.thegoons.com

**Graves, The - Love, Love, Love, CD**

If terms like "alt.country" or "y'alternative" mean anything to you (or anything at all, for that matter), then perhaps they'd be best suited for The Graves. What makes this record so enjoyable is the mixture

of instruments. Jangly guitars are certainly featured throughout, but they often take a backseat to a combination of horns, vibes and low-budget electronic sounds. (Chances are you'll recognize a few of the tones from that Casio keyboard collecting dust in your closet.) The Graves come off like a more lo-fi version of Wilco, Beck or Old 97s and will more than likely be the perfect soundtrack to your next dorm-room rodeo. (PS) Film Guerrero, PO Box 14414 Portland, OR 97293, www.filmguerrero.com

**Great Cleaning Off, The / Sound Of Failure, The—split, 7"**

Speedy, melodic hardcore with vocals that are shouted incomprehensibly. The Great Cleaning Off have a streak of Econochrist in a Fat Wreck kind of way, and The Sound Of Failure is similar but more metallic. Part of a bike-themed 7" series, the record includes a zine with song explanations and biking resources. (KR) Ed Walters Records, 2416 S. Warnock St., Philadelphia, PA 19148, www.edwaltersrecords.org

**Green Acre, The – S/T, CD**

This up-tempo math rock unit provides us with an action-packed three songs/15 minutes' worth of music. These guys took Cap'n Jazz 101 and went in their own direction, which could be mistaken for emo. If you dig the sound, it's worth looking into. (DM) Santos Records / Room Temperature Records, no contact info provided

**Halley – Forget the Leaves, Autumn Will Change Us, CD**

Halley plays mellow and textured emotional pop music from Austin. They create their own style, melding together the traditional guitar/bass/drums with keys, brass, strings, and in the last song, even a choir. (TK) Self-released, www.likethecomet.com

**Halogens, The - The Resolution, CDEP**

Suspiciously slick, yet commercially engaging, pop rock that I would horribly label, "Beatlesque shoegazer rock with umph." This Boston quartet create the epitome of radio-friendly rock: nonoffensively tame with moments of catchiness, which provoke guilty pleasures. Their boring moments definitely drag, but I catch myself humming particular melodies afterwards. (VC) Simba c/o Revelation Records, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615, www.simbarecordings.com



### Harkonen – Shake Harder Boy, CD

Loud, aggressive and controlled, Harkonen does it as good as anybody. At a reasonable 11 songs, *Shake Harder Boy* is a solid record, infused with a churning and powerful sound and a subtle but intense emotionality. For fans of bands like Unbroken and Will Haven. Nice work. (JG)  
Hydrahead Records, PO Box 990248, Boston, MA 02199, [www.hydrahead.com](http://www.hydrahead.com)

### Heat Lightning – Even A Baby Could Do That, CDEP

Shoddy recording, but enough style to let you know how funny these guys can be with their doofy lyrics ("I don't care, Golden Retriever/I know they're really popular" from "I Wish I Had A Dog") and maddening screeches. Lots of muffled guitar and wavy keyboards dominate this self-deprecating crew. (SP)  
Self-released, PO Box 7504, Ann Arbor, MI, 48107

### Hedrick, Tom – As If!, CD

Um, if Sesame Street or Animaniacs or the Mormon/Christian Reich were looking for well-done and safe rock-lite songs about "James K. Polk," "Radio Knobs" salesmen, or car songs ("Little Saturn"), this is the way to go. Otherwise, it's fucking retarded and neither witty nor humorous, as the liner notes imply. (DM)  
Freedom of Speech Records, [www.goodforks.com](http://www.goodforks.com)

### Hide And Go Freak – S/T, 7"

The short-lived carnival music trend fronted by World Inferno and Tarot Bolero continues on! Peppy and spastic, this tidbit shows promise of any circus melodies, creating a surreal environment only clowns can endure. Once the singer finds a little sass, this band could woo hipsters across the country. (VC)  
Self-released, [petsetrecords@yahoo.com](mailto:petsetrecords@yahoo.com)

### Holding On – Question What You Live For, CD

Sounding similar to all the bands I have heard on Bridge Nine, Holding On plays angry, midtempo hardcore with plenty of shout-a-long lyrics and an almost guaranteed mosh-metal break down in every song. Listen to this record only if you are a "tough guy." (TK)  
Bridge Nine, PO Box 990052 Boston, MA 02199-0052, [www.bridge9.com](http://www.bridge9.com)

### Hot Rod Circuit – Been There Smoked That, CD

This album compiles an early EP, some live tracks, a couple compilation songs and material from their earlier incarnation, Antidote. Pleasant indie/emo stuff along the lines of GUK, JEW or Archers Of

Loaf, but a little less dynamic. I don't know if this CD will convert anyone, but it's a nice companion piece for fans. (NS)  
Triple Crown, 331 W. 57th St., PMB 472, New York, NY 10019, [www.triplecrownrecords.com](http://www.triplecrownrecords.com)

### Hot Six – New Blue, CD

Nation Of Ulysses and Rites Of Spring, your royalty checks are in the mail. Oh wait, these are original songs, not covers. Six tracks ripped right out of the days when emo wasn't wimpy radio crap. Actually, if you can't tell, I really like this disc. Power to the kids. (EA)  
Breaker Breaker Audio Recording Company, PO Box 536071, Orlando, FL 32853

### Hot Water Music / Casket Lottery, The – Colors Words & Dreams, 7"

Two of hardcore's dearest pay tribute to an often overlooked '80s hardcore act, Government Issue. HWM offer up a hard-hitting, angry version of "Jaded Eyes" while The Casket Lottery's cover of "For Ever" has the band at their most melodic. The nice green marble vinyl will appeal to collectors. (BN)  
Second Nature Recordings, PO Box 11543, Kansas City, MO 64138, [www.secondnaturerecordings.com](http://www.secondnaturerecordings.com)

### House Of Low Culture – Gettin' Sentimental, 2x7"

Aaron Turner of Isis/Hydrahead fame takes a break from the metal mania for something entirely different. The four "songs" that make up this nicely packaged double 7" set are really airy, quiet, experimental soundscapes. Not my cup of tea, but all you sound-art laptop noodlers may enjoy this. (MG)  
Robotic Empire, 12001 Aintree Ln, Reston, VA 20191, [www.roboticempire.com](http://www.roboticempire.com)

### Humint – Speed Demons, CDEP

If you're in search of a wickedly active punk band to liven up your boring life, then score yourself this riotous EP from a truly boisterous group of rockers. With streams of guttural wails, raucous guitars, and a somehow sweet temperament, Humint can only please. Speed demons indeed. (SP)  
Self-released, no contact info provided

### Icons Of Filth – Nostradamnedus, CD

Thirteen messy rock tunes with political lyrics and hardcore energy that hasn't faded in the 20 years that these lads have been around. (BC)  
Go Kart Records, PO BOX 20, Prince Street Station, New York, NY 10012, [www.gokartrecords.com](http://www.gokartrecords.com)

### Immortal Lee County Killers II, The – Love Is A Charm Of Powerful Trouble, CD

Hailing from Alabama, this duo plays scummy bluegrass-rockabilly-punk-country fusion sure to blow your eardrums out at your local punk bar when they come through your town. Song titles include "Goin' Down South" and "Shitcanned Again." Take my word on this one and see them live. (AE)

Estrus Records, PO Box 2125, Bellingham, WA 98227, [www.estrus.com](http://www.estrus.com)

### Inhuman – Black Reign, CD

Brooklyn-based hardcore unit blends the old-school sound with chugga-chugga breakdowns and even a little melodic punk. Two live tracks, complete with obligatory "shout outs" and a call for "kickboxing," close the album—yes, another moody tough-guy album. But that doesn't mean it's bad; it just is what it is. (MG)

Released Power Productions, c/o Alain Herszaft, PO Box 48, BXL 19, 1190 Brussels, Belgium, [www.rpp-hc.com](http://www.rpp-hc.com)

### International Noise Conspiracy, The – Bigger Cages, Longer Chains, CDEP

Whoa, this Swedish band really knows how to rock. If you enjoy politically infused music with a definite classic rock/mod/psychedelic mood, then TINC might as well be your favorite damn band, bud! Though consisting of only six tracks, each song is long enough to make the album sound like a full-blown LP. Perfect to get your activist juices flowing to the beat of dancy rhythms and the sexy drawl of Dennis Lyxzen's cynical meanderings. Outstanding lyrics include "Cold sweat running down the neck at airport check-ins/ Cause freedom ends and it dies where unions and walls begin" from the pointed "Beautiful So Alone." The cool packaging consists of wonderful politically subversive quotes from luminaries like (Thomas?) Carlyle and Guy Debord. In addition, printed after the lyrics for each song are short lists of topical books for the convenience of probing readers and listeners like myself. And don't miss out on the EP's four TINC bonus videos and excerpt of Noam Chomsky's speech on the American War on Terror. (SP)

Epitaph / Burning Heart Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA, 90026, [www.epitaph.com](http://www.epitaph.com), [www.burningheart.com](http://www.burningheart.com)

### Reviewer Spotlight: Julie Gerstein (JG)

BUILT TO SPILL, *Keep It Like A Secret*. Awhile ago, my friend Todd said, "I'm not gay, but I would definitely sleep with Doug Martsch. He's so sensitive." A few years later, Todd actually decided that he was gay, but that's not the point. Martsch, Built To Spill's principal songwriter and singer, crafts perfect pop songs, which resonate both lyrically and musically. And 1999's *Keep It Like A Secret*, the band's fourth full-length release, shows Martsch coming into his own. Gone is the straight-up bubblegum pop of *There's Nothing Wrong With Love*, and the uncontrolled wailing of *Perfect From Now On*. What's left are simple, yet achingly pristine, pop moments. Maybe it's because Martsch partners with his wife, Karena, to write lyrics, but Built To Spill's songs seem to describe succinctly the pain, heartache and ego damage of relationships. Fun.

In rotation: Q And Not U, *Different Damage*; Interpol, *Turn On The Bright Lights*; Ivy, *Realistic*; Jai Alai Savant demo.

**Jazz June, The – Better Off Without Air, CD**

There are like four really good songs on here, but the rest is filler. It seems that bigger "emo" bands are trying to shed that tag, either by turning into rock bands or by getting artsy—like The Jazz June. They've sacrificed a lot of the actual songs with experimental throwaways. (NS)  
Initial Records, PO Box 17131, Louisville, KY 40217, [www.initialrecords.com](http://www.initialrecords.com)

**Jerry Built – Upstarts, CD**

The stench of third-wave emo has finally hit the shores of the United Kingdom, for this is the Motherland's version of that mediocre genre. Self-described as having a "Vagrant sound," it makes some of us wish that said "sound" would have stayed confined within said label. (AA)  
Firefly Recordings, PO Box 30179, London E17 5FE, UK, [www.fireflyrecordings.com](http://www.fireflyrecordings.com)

**Jett Brando – Jaggedjunktun, CDEP**

Previously of "All Natural Lemon & Lime Flavors," Jett Brando has been compared to Elliott Smith and Stephen Merritt, though I'm reminded more of Matthew Sweet. This CD is very eclectic, never keeping the same mood on any of the six songs. Experimental pop the alternarock crew will eat up. (TK)  
Go Kart Records, PO Box 20 Prince Street Station, New York, NY 10012, [www.gokartrecords.com](http://www.gokartrecords.com)

**Joan Of Arc – So Much Alive And Lovelessness, CD**

First off, this came without a cover, and I think that that is a gigantic disservice to the band and artists involved. I find it really odd that they can enclose a press release showing the cover art, but they can't enclose it. Anyhow, this is moody, angular music with vocals recorded at just above talking volume, which is fine for the first couple of tracks, but it lacks variation over the course of its 11 songs. Lots of morbid-sounding talk about relationships without putting any real emotion in it to or getting the feeling across, but hey, it's impeccably recorded. I call this kind of stuff "coffee-house rock." (AS)  
Jade Tree, 2310 Kennwynn Rd., Wilmington, DE 19810, [www.jadetreec.com](http://www.jadetreec.com)

**John Brown's Army – Who Fucked The Culture Up?, CD**

JBA play great old school hardcore/thrash with deep, guttural vocals. The music is awesome, fast and not overly simplistic. I'm not crazy about the

vocals, though; they sound too throaty and forced. I guess most people would probably find them fitting. Other than that, great European-style thrash. (NS)  
Gloom Records, PO Box 14253, Albany, NY 12212, [www.gloomrecords.com](http://www.gloomrecords.com)

**Jon Langford And His Sadies – Mayors Of The Moon, CD**

When does Jon Langford sleep? In less than 12 months, he's released three full-length albums—the Mekons' fantastic *Oooh*, The Waco Brothers' *New Deal* and *Mayors Of The Moon*—put together the amazing *Executioners Last Song* compilation, toured with the Mekons, the Wacos, and on his own, created any number of amazing paintings, and kept up with his alt-weekly comic *Great Pop Things*. And what's truly galling is that all of his stuff is phenomenal. I mean sure, if most of it were crap, then yeah, go for it, Jon. But the fact is that Langford manages to crank out consistently great work at a rate that makes pretty much everyone else in the underground look like they're not even trying. Case in point: *Mayors Of The Moon*. The man could have coasted through the album and still come off looking like the baddest ass in badassville by releasing three albums in a year. He could have filled it with songs that didn't make it onto *Oooh* or *New Deal*. But instead, he went ahead and laid down 12 fully realized tracks that sound wholly different from his other work. Gone are the chaotic, gospel-fueled tracks of the Mekons' latest opus; gone are the slickly produced, radio-ready country rockers of the Wacos. Instead, Langford serves up 12 simple, airy, bright country ballads with just enough touch of dirt in them to remind you that the man's as punk as they come. Come on Jon, take a break already and give us a chance to keep up. (DS)  
Bloodshot, 3039 W. Irving Park Rd., Chicago, IL 60618, [www.bloodshotrecords.com](http://www.bloodshotrecords.com)

**John Rifle – Fracas Nurture, CD**

With its dark, sarcastic sound bites over nearly classical-sounding piano and keyboard arrangements, this brings to mind a Negativland-styled societal spoof. Lots of drug and violence references, and it's good fun picking out the stolen quotes. But at over an hour, you get tired of holding your headphones in shock. (AS)  
Self-released, [www.johnrifle.com](http://www.johnrifle.com)

**Kids Near Water—iHey Zeus!, CD**

Familiar melodic hardcore/postpunk. There's lots of riffage going on here, with alternating screaming/singing vocals—like I said, familiar. They're

definitely more than competent at this style of music, but it's nothing mind-blowing. Pleasant but not enough really to move you. (KR)  
Firefly Recordings, PO Box 30179, London, E17 5FE, [www.fireflyrecordings.com](http://www.fireflyrecordings.com)

**Kills, The – Keep On Your Mean Side, CD**

This could possibly be the coolest CD I've heard in some time. Cool in that it honestly makes you *feel* cooler listening to it. The Kill's dirty mix of crunky beats and fuzzbox guitar, strutting vocals, and just straight-up sex makes you walk with a swagger when you hear it. Lead vocalist VV (is it any secret that it's Discount's Alison Mosshart?) fully rules this record with her smoky, alto vocals and sneering attitude, while Hotel (yep, that's his name) holds up the back end with his whispered backups. They're just a two piece, but the album is recorded like there are 30 of them—guitars are layered on top of guitars, vocals on top of vocals. The Kills have managed to walk the fine line between being retro and being influenced by things from the past. The band has managed to take the lo-fi aesthetics of garage rock, couple them with the sex appeal of soul, and then run the whole mix through the mud of today. The result is music that is totally *now* while totally *then*—and totally amazing. (DS)  
Rough Trade, [www.roughtrade.com](http://www.roughtrade.com)

**Kitty Kill, The – Domesticated, CD**

The Kitty Kill are three ladies from Boston playing their brand of no-frills, poppy rock. Melodic guitar lines and harmonized vocals keep your toes tapping. I can see this on K Records or some other Pacific Northwest label. (KM)  
Self-released, PO Box 230151, Boston, MA 02123, [www.thekittykill.com](http://www.thekittykill.com)

**Knee Jerk - Cruel & Unusual, CD**

The Ft. Collins power pop-punk band is back with a more distorted guitar sound and clearer vocal melodies. Good stuff and well worth checking out. (BC)  
Knot Known Records, 414 S. Mill Ave., Ste 106, Tempe, AZ 85285, [www.knotknown.com](http://www.knotknown.com)

**Knucklehead – Hostage Radio..., CD**

The best thing out of Canada besides hockey and bacon, Knucklehead put together a fine example of snotty street punk with attitude to match. It's a vivacious mixture of angry, working class oi mixed with the purity and ardor of '77-era punk rock. I wish more bands had such passion. (BN)  
Longshot Music/Scratch Records, 726 Richards St., Vancouver, BC V6B 3A4, Canada, [www.scratchrecords.com](http://www.scratchrecords.com), [www.longshotmusic.com](http://www.longshotmusic.com)

**Reviewer Spotlight: Art Ettinger (AE)**

AUGUST SPIES, 94-97. Boston had a resurgence of punk in the '90s, introducing bands such as Showcase Showdown and The Unseen onto the scene. A band that tragically got lost in the shuffle is the already-forgotten August Spies. The Spies had a strong local following, but didn't tour and eventually became known locally as a band that played too often and didn't write enough new material. Exhibiting a unique sense of humor through intelligently mocking lyrics, the band recorded classic 7" after classic 7", most of which are collected on the Rodent Popsicle August Spies anthology, 94-97. Straightforward and catchy, the band's signature sound comes from the unique vocals sung by a man who either always had food in his mouth or had a major speech impediment. This CD features 32 brisk street-punk anthems, including such classic tracks as "Hallelujah, I Am A Bum" ("I'm not a Nazi and I'm not a slob/ but I can't say that I want a job"), "Deadbeat Dad" ("make my little wifey sad/ make my little bastard mad/ make my old daddy glad"), and a rare WMBR promo spot. 94-97 is a modern classic that's luckily still in print. Fans will also want to check out the band's splits with Toxic Narcotic and Showcase Showdown, as well as their amazing full-length on Espo Records.

**I've also been grooving to:** *Long Live Oi!* from the funny Japanese band The Discocks; *Peelander-Z*, *Rocket Gold Star* (reviewed last issue); and everything by The Bananas.



#### ♪ Laddio Bolocko – The Life And Times Of, 2xCD

This is a great discography for a band that I wish I had known about earlier. Laddio Bolocko play(ed) some crazy-ass, art-prog experimental rock, causing me to think of some freak lab experiment involving Cheer Accident and Lightning Bolt. A multitude of instruments, electronic dabbling, and samples move from very soothing and surreal grooves to orchestrated cacophonies. Simple rock lines, staccato repetitive sounds, lush (almost melodic) arrangements, pure noise, jazzy breakdowns—you'll find it all here, and it's not overdone. This double CD release includes all of their records (*Strange Warmings LP*, *In Real Time EP*, and *As If By Remote EP*). (MG)

No Quarter, PO Box 42584, Philadelphia, PA 19101, [www.noquarter.net](http://www.noquarter.net)

#### ♪ Last In Line – Congested, 7"

Boston's horror-movie-loving hardcore band Last In Line is on their way to becoming the scene superstars they deserve to be. With the current early-'80s hardcore revival, some great records and bands may get lost in the frenzy. This 7" is every bit as notable as heralded recent releases by such bands as Spazm 151 or Amdid Pertersens Armé. The songs are fast and relatively simple, but technically adept and with slightly more changes than most early hardcore. With few exceptions (Dwarves/Cramps/Misfits/Templars/etc.), monotonous metal drivel is the main type of rock music that greatly borrows from horror iconography. It's a recent development for horror fans to have bands like this to choose from, and this record's final track, "Herbert West: Re-Animator," is a hardcore horror anthem worthy of celebration. Some of the antidrug lyrics suggest that Last In Line is an edge band, but if so they've greatly toned down the didacticism associated with the movement. (AE) Gloom Records, PO Box 14253, Albany, NY 12212, [www.gloomrecords.com](http://www.gloomrecords.com)

#### Le Professeur Ladybug – Thou Art The Man, CD

This was some distorted concert by some distorted band with distortion. (BC) <http://failure.humpin.org>

#### Les – The View From Here, CD

Grungy, soulful, and radio-friendly alternarock. Singer/songwriter Les plays all the instruments except the drums, and he sounds goshdamned

honest when he sings about war and love and emotional abuse. If you like this sort of music, you'll probably consider Les a gem. (AT) Self-released, [www.lesnoise.com](http://www.lesnoise.com)

#### Liberats, The – Disgrace, 7"

From the looks of them, the members in The Liberats can't be much older than 16 or 17. That said, they play an OK brand of straightforward SoCal hardcore. I imagine they spend a lot of time scribbling lyrics in their history notebooks rather than paying attention in class. (JD) Violent Reaction Records, PO Box 902, Artesia, CA 90702-0902

#### Little Jeans – S/T, CDEP

I really had no patience for this. Like a bad early '90s hangover where, after throwing up, you're forced to look at the regurgitated Weezer and Nada Surf that you had to drink the night before. Love the '80s movie references, guys! (PS) Asian Man Records, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030, [www.asianmanrecords.com](http://www.asianmanrecords.com)

#### ♪ Loch Ness Mouse – Key West, CD

Do you like the ocean? Perfectly blue skies? Dreamy songs featuring sugary-voiced dudes reminiscent of The Monkees? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you're bound to enjoy Loch Ness Mouse's pleasingly plaintive sound. Each of *Key West*'s 12 songs brighten up any gloomy day with the childish twists of sparkly tambourines and nifty lyrics like these from "I Lost My Heart To Mary Ann": "I like Billy and Billy likes me and we both love Mary Ann/ It's so silly that I'm not Billy." Another great track, "Jules Verne," waxes poetic on the imaginative author of *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea* with "As a boy you sat up at night, reading Jules Verne in the den light/ You traveled around the whole world with him, under the water." Packed with rolling guitars and lovely horns, Norway's most wistful band will whisk you away into the magical world of salty hair and mindless beachcombing. (SP) Happy Happy Birthday To Me Records, PO Box 1035, Panama City, FL 32402, [www.hhbtm.com](http://www.hhbtm.com)

#### Loose Fur – S/T, CDEP

Swirly guitars, drugged voices, and a slacker-genius 'tude. Armed with the necessary cerebral wardrobe for such a trippy-intellectual feat, Loose Fur does well for itself. Happy-sad melodies and kooky, literary lyrics like "A connection all the same/ Urine loves cold slate" make this CD a nice choice for relaxation. (SP)

#### laddio bolocko / mendoza line, the

Drag City, PO Box 476867, IL 60647, [www.dragcity.com](http://www.dragcity.com)

#### Lorelei – Our Minds Have Been Electrified, CD

Pittsburgh-based Lorelei rails against traditional guitar rock by boasting a double bass drum, *no guitars* line-up. While they win points for avant garde moxie, *Our Minds* sounds a whole hell of a lot like early-'90s riot grrl grit. Nothing new, I'm moving on. (JG) Ice-made Records, [www.ice-made.com](http://www.ice-made.com)

#### Lovetron – All Across The Grand Charade, CD

If indie-rock scene ever ventured into a mix of the Las Vegas vocalist thing with a psychedelic synth/'70s disco approach, Lovetron would lead the way. This is not a crack on Lovetron, because this record is catchy as hell. It could be the next big thing. (DM)

Intergalactic Frontline, PO Box 1273, El Paso, TX 79947, [www.intergalacticfrontline.com](http://www.intergalacticfrontline.com)

#### Mandown – Quicker Than Poison, 7"

Fast-paced, pissed off old-school hardcore with typical old-school hardcore vocals. This isn't bad at all, but it doesn't grab me, either. (KM) Capsule Records, no contact information provided

#### Maybellines, The – Chatfield Holiday, CD

The four-piece Denver-based Maybellines sound like their name: cute. A prominent organ (cool and farfisa-like), simple but pretty guitar lines, and fun, head-bopping rhythms accompany baby-sweet, pixie-girl vocals on sugar-pop paeans to young indie kids in love. You'll also hear adorable boy/girl duets about being crushed out. (JS) Best Friends Records, PO Box 48214, Denver, CO 80204, [www.bestfriendsrecords.com](http://www.bestfriendsrecords.com)

#### Melchior, Dan – This Is Not The Medway Sound, LP

My, this plucky, old-timey record is a nice little surprise! Dan's a singer/guitarist who has collaborated with Billy Childish and Holly Golightly. Here, he shows off some subdued styles of stripped-down songsmithing. It's a bit country, a bit bluesy, and not too shabby. (AT) SmartGuy, 3288 21st St, PMB 32, San Francisco, CA 94110, [www.smartguyrecords.com](http://www.smartguyrecords.com)

#### Mendoza Line, The – If They Knew This Was The End, CD

This is pretty good stuff. Elephant 6 or Kindercore-syle pop from Athens, Ga., with pretty male and female vocals. You can tell these guys

#### Reviewer Spotlight: Tim Kuehl (TK)

THE BANANAS, *Forbidden Fruit*. I dare you to pick up a CD from the Bananas and not like it. Upbeat, sloppy lo-fi power-pop-punk that never gets old. Every one of their songs is pop perfection, *every single one!* Their mirthful lyrics show the true genius of this Sacramento trio. For example, the beginning of "Enemies Everywhere" starts out "The ham handed hi-jinks of high-minded highbrows/ Shoplifting revolutionaries get thrown in the hooskow/ Militiamen from Michigan are aiming at my head/ I think I've had enough of this/ I think I'll go to bed." *Forbidden Fruit* was recorded on a four track in 1998 and was the Bananas' first CD. It was released on Plan-It-X Records (*Operation Cliff Claven*, *Against Me*, *This Bike Is A Pipe Bomb*). Prior to this CD, they released two seven inches and a couple of comp tracks, which I heard from fellow reviewer Art, and are in the process of being rereleased. There is also a CD they put out two years ago called *A Slippery Subject*, which, depending on who you talk to, may be better than *Forbidden Fruit*. Either way, anything you can pick up from them will be fully enjoyed.

Currently vibrating Tim's ear hairs: 20-year anniversary Discord comp; cLOUDDEAD, *S/T*; The Kills, *Black Rooster E.P.*; Pinhead Gunpowder, *Shoot The Moon*; Dead Prez, *Turn off the Radio*.

really dig on some '60s music, and they pull that sound off well. Good music for frolicking in a dandelion field. I likes. (KM)  
Bar/None Records, PO Box 1704, Hoboken, NJ 07030, [www.bar-none.com](http://www.bar-none.com)

#### Midgetmen, The – Pool Party Emergency, CD

A little bit old school rock 'n' roll, a little bit saucy Ramones, The Midgetmen manage to create a record that skips all over the sidewalk—sometimes at a triumphant, happy gait and other times in a sort of pathetic, drunken stupor. The vocals are probably this band's strong suit. (JG)  
Self-released, 301 E. Fourth St., Austin, TX, 78701

#### Mirrormen, The – Breaking Class, CD

Melodic hardcore from the UK that packs wallop yet offers painfully little in the way of originality. Breakneck drumming countered with melodic guitars, angry vocals and group choruses—another band willing to play the same old shit without bringing anything new to a scene that's quickly growing stale. (BN)  
Malt Soda Recordings, PO Box 7611, Chandler, AZ 85246, [www.maltsoda.com](http://www.maltsoda.com)

#### Ms. Led—Afternoon In Central Park, CD

Pretty straight-ahead poppy punk with good female vocals. The record gets downright radio-friendly as it proceeds, but the vocals and melodies remain strong. Singer Lesli Wood's voice is similar to The Reputation's Elizabeth Elmore, and just like that band, this record stalls when it slows down or gets too poppy. (KR)  
Self-released, [www.msled.com](http://www.msled.com)

#### Moral Crux – Pop Culture Assassins, CD

These guys have been around for almost 20 years and continue to put out amazing and completely underappreciated releases. Moral Crux pretty much wrote the pop punk mechanics manual, alongside other greats like the Queers and the Ramones. But what makes this band stand alone is the raw political and social messages in their lyrics. "It's time to take back what was once your own," sings James Farris on "Dissaffected," and it's true. We could all take a lesson from Moral Crux. If they haven't lost their cry of revolution after 20 years, then you have no excuse, OK? (JG)  
Panic Button, 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94712, [www.panicbuttonrecords.com](http://www.panicbuttonrecords.com)

#### Moreland Audio – Turbogold, CD

Instrumental rock band that avoids all of the instrumental rock band "no-no's" (too quiet, too spastic, etc.) by utilizing their advanced musician-

ship of drums, guitars and lap-steel to direct listeners toward them, not toward the bar. On level with The Fucking Champs, but not doing the metal thing. (MG)  
54°40' Or Fight!, PO Box 1601, Acme, MI 49610-1601, [www.fiftyfourfortyorfight.com](http://www.fiftyfourfortyorfight.com)

#### Motion, The – Cold Heroes, CD

Chicago's The Motion follows up their self-titled debut record with this disc. Brent Larson's anthem rock guitar sound is at the forefront of the trio's songs (I think he's channeling the spirit of early '90s J Mascis), but the lyrics are the real gems on this record. Worth checking out. (JD)  
Sad Loud America Records, 2617 W. 49th St., Austin, TX 78731

#### Masonics, The – Live In London, CD

Considering these guys play in pressed shirts and black ties, I thought The Masonics were either a retro-swing band or a an old-school ska outfit. So I was pretty darn surprised when I popped in this CD and discovered a tsunami of good ol' catchy rock 'n' roll. Stylish, it's not. But fun as hell to bop about to while drinking in a bar? Heck, yeah. This energetic trio screw around with standard groovy drumbeats and quick-paced guitar riffs. They're also big fans of the occasional classic guitar solo, which gives their vibe a very '50s bad-boy feel. The songs mostly revolve around the usual trappings of guy-rock, mainly the lack of women and/or money. A couple excellent tracks include the fervid "Going Down Fast" and "Schitzo," two fast tunes with simple lyrics like "I look in your eyes and your mind starts to rearrange/ You're schitzo, you're schitzo!" To top off the drunkenly brisk mood, Mick Hampshire's guileless voice cuts through each song like a hooligan's fist at a soccer match. Not to mention the audience's loud remarks ("More guitar! Shut up!") and the band's severe Brit accents somehow make this CD even more invitingly amusing to jam along to. (SP)  
Smart Guy Records, 3288 21st St., PMB #32, San Francisco, CA, 94110, [www.smartgutrecords.com](http://www.smartgutrecords.com)

#### Murphy, Sport – Uncle, CD

Uncle is Sport Murphy's musical tribute to the firefighter nephew he lost on September 11. Mournful, slow-paced, Americana numbers (complete with some banjo and harmonica) dominate this album. However, a couple of the songs on here caught me completely off guard. For example, the song "Behistun" is simply Sport singing "behistun" over and over while an '80s-sounding drum sample

repeats in the background. If you dig on the singer-songwriter vibe and don't mind a little twist in your music, you might want to check this out, as Sport can also write some amazing pop tunes. Favorite songs include: "Paul LaGrutta" and "Bad Guest." (KM)  
Kill Rock Stars, PMB 418, 120 NE State Ave., Olympia, WA 98501, [www.killrockstars.com](http://www.killrockstars.com)

#### Mutilators – Hot Rod Whore, CD

I really want to like this album. I do. I mean, the music's pretty good with its muffled, dixie-fried male vocals and crazy rockabilly guitars. Actually, it's kind of contagious and definitely great to crank up at a rowdy party. But, I don't know, I just can't get past the feeling that though this album is fairly humorous in tone, the whole car-slut-white-trash message *Hot Rod Whore* oozes just ain't too funny. Particularly offensive tracks include the disturbing "Teenage Pussy," "Jailbait," and (ahem) both versions of title track, "Hot Rod Whore," the first which features a stupid-sounding female getting all horny over some greaser's car. By the end of the song she's left alone saying, "Hey, where are you going?" as a car's engine roars in the distance. Too bad, considering the band's musicianship is decent enough to applaud. Maybe next time they'll reconsider praising statutory rape and replace "whores" and "pussies" with something I don't know, oh, a little less hateful. Whether it's supposed to be sarcastic or not, The Mutilators' rants just don't come across as subversive infamy. (SP)  
Self-released, [www.mutilators.com](http://www.mutilators.com)

#### Myles Of Destruction - Running Only Makes The Fire Worse, CD

Dark, feedback-induced noise with eerie—yet tasteful—violin stylings. It's demented "almost, but no quite there" no-wave with a twisted, confrontational style like Neurosis. Parts of this record are tight with concentration, but fall apart into jam sessions of pure, noisy chaos. The lackluster production hinders its intriguing creepiness. (VC)  
Self-released, PO Box 42673, Philadelphia, PA 19101, [www.mylesofdestruction.com](http://www.mylesofdestruction.com)

#### Natchez Shakers – Shaker Hymns No. 2, CD

Irish folk songs done more traditionally than, say, the Pogues. I don't suspect too many punk rockers will dig this, but it is a change of pace that stuck out among a sea of shit. Because acoustic is all the rave, they may have a place in your collection. (EA)  
Thorp Records, PO Box 6786, Toledo, OH 43612, [www.thorprecords.com](http://www.thorprecords.com)

#### Reviewer Spotlight: Krystle Miller (KM)

GO SAILOR, S/T. Between her stints with Tiger Trap and The Softies, Rose Melberg teamed up with Paul Curran (Crimpspine) and Amy Linton (Henry's Dress) to form indie-pop super group Go Sailor. During their time together, the band only released three seven inches and two compilation tracks. Lookout! Records was kind enough to pull the material together for one handy discography. The music here is indie-pop/twee with a little pop-punk thrown in the mix. From beginning to end, this record plays like a dance party inside a gingerbread house on Lollipop Lane. Paul's bouncing bass lines and Amy's toe-tapping drums keep the beat as Rose breaks hearts with her sugary-sweet vocals. The lyrics on this collection range from sweet ("my life with you will shine brighter than gold/ memories of heaven for when I get old") to sour ("but I won't wish your plane down/ just this time/ next time you won't be so lucky"), but all of it is cleverly written. Tiger Trap/Rose Melberg fans, you must give this one a listen. An excellent collection of twee-pop goodness.

**Playlist:** Party of Helicopters, *Abracadaver*; Shotmaker's discography; Neil Perry/Joshua Fit For Battle, split LP; Pg. 99/Process is Dead, split 7"; Rainer Maria, *Long Knives Drawn*.



### Nate Ashley - The Darker Corners Of Your Heart, CD

In the right-hand corner of the CD jacket, a note states, "For best sound quality, listen to with a glass of wine." Pretentious fucks. Despite the "note," this spacey collection of indie pop is similar to the western mood music of Friends Of Dean Martinez. Strangely, it's kinda cool. (GBS)  
Left Handed Label/Knw-Yr-Own, 1717 Commercial Ave., Anacortes, WA 98221, www.knw-yr-own.com

### Negative Approach—Tied Down, 12"

Negative Approach's first full-length is back in print for the first time in 10 years, and it's not some suped-up CD with bonus tracks and different artwork. Just the same straight-up early '80s hard-core punk that's short, fast and without pretension. (KR)  
Touch & Go, PO Box 25520, Chicago, IL 60625

### Never Heard Of It - Limited Edition, CD

Throw together four young guys with spiky hairdos, easily broken hearts, and a love of punk-influenced rock, and what do you have? That's right, NHOI, a breakneck speed kind of band that pounds the walls with brooding lyrics and heart-throb vocals. A bit adolescent in spirit, but satisfying nonetheless. (SP)  
Unmotivated Records, 2677 S. Citrus St., West Covina, CA 91791, www.neverheardofit.com

### ♪ New Mexican Disaster Squad - Abrasive Repulsive Disorder, CD

My first impression of this band was very positive. For starters, their name is just fucking cool, and the cover art consists of a collage of politically inspired photos layered nicely. But the content of the CD disappointed me. The music seems like it was heavily influenced by Lifetime, which is still really cool, just unexpected. My problem, though, was with the lyrics. I don't know what to think. Are they a political band? Are they a joke band? In the opening song, "1983" (an ode to the year 1983), "Why can't it be '83?/ So many bands I wanna see/ Misfits put out Earth AD/ And Bad Brains still banned in D.C./ People just don't understand/ There is nothing like the '80s, man/ FLEX YOUR HEAD!" This may not be a good example, but it seems that in these songs, the rhyme is more important than the meaning of the words. I guess it's forgivable if they rock live. (TK)  
Self-released, www.newmexicanadisastersquad.com

### Reviewer Spotlight: (Mr)Dana Morse

VERBAL ASSAULT, *Trial*. I've never been huge on the whole hXc scene. Sure, I grew up around it, put on some shows with it and had a lot of albums by it. But since hXc is such a cookie-cutter genre, bands that reached for something different are few and far between. The bands that put emotion and musical integrity behind the music to get away from the herd really caught my attention. Verbal Assault brought forward ability along with feelings and emotion to bring their own personality in the music. The music has occasional metal tendencies, which were common at this turning point of hXc as the genres blended. This complemented the lyrical content of stories about life's doubt, trials and tribulations over "You're Wrong," "X On My Hand," and "I'll Beat You Down." Unfortunately, VA got overlooked, but those who know "love" this record. There is a compilation out of the early years and a second one on the way of the later years, which includes this album. But *Trial* can still be found at new and used shops. Oh, yeah, these are the goods.

What's spinning while my turn table isn't: Retisonic, *Lean Beat*; Q And Not U, *Different Damage*; new Roots; new Rainer Maria; new Zion; Fela Kuti; Donald Byrd, *Ethiopian Knights*; and Pretty Girls Makes Graves.

### ♪ Nightingale - Alive Again: The Breathing Shadow Part IV, CD

Holy fucking shit. This is the best review CD I've ever gotten. It's times like this that I'm actually happy for *Punk Planet*'s lenient acceptance policy. First, a relevant personal aside. Two weeks ago, my friend Tim and I were trying to download all of the '80s action-movie soundtrack songs we could find—like "Break The Ice" from *Rad* and "You're The Best" from *Karate Kid*. You know, those rockin' action-sequence songs that get you pumped. Well, Nightingale has channeled the '80s and written the best soundtrack to a movie that doesn't exist! OK, the first song, a mournful piano ballad, was a bit of a teaser. But as soon as the powerful melody of the second song hits you, you can't deny Nightingale's brilliance. Nightingale has cut out all of the filler from your favorite hair-metal band and left all of the sweet power ballads and head-noddin' rock anthems. These guys are so triumphant, and their weapons of choice are soaring metal guitars, harmonious keyboards and soulful lyrics. Sweden is so far ahead of us in metal technology. You guys have restored my faith in music, much like *Over The Top* restored my faith in arm wrestling. (NS)  
The End Records, 331 Rio Grande, #58, Salt Lake City, UT 84101, www.theendrecords.com

### No Trend - Tristonian Noash-Vegas Polyester Complex, CD

I don't really know what to make of this. A surf-, funk-, country-, and hardcore-influenced band with extremely weird vocals and a lot of horns. The lyrics ("Your purple deoxidized Gremlin smells like stale menthol cigarettes") on this release are pretty strange as well. (KM)  
Touch & Go, PO Box 25520, Chicago, IL 60625

### No Warning - III Blood, CD

A Madball clone from Canada. Ninety-five percent of the lyrics are about being angry at people who talk shit, then the singer talks shit about said people. If you feel you haven't been angry enough lately, this is the sure-fire cure. (TK)  
Bridge Nine, PO Box 990052, Boston, MA 02199-0052, www.bridge9.com

### NYC Smoke - For The Posers, CD

Indulgent rock 'n' roll from NYC "singer-songwriter" Howie Statland. Poppy, riff-heavy college rock that fits between Creed and Pearl Jam on any

commercial rock radio station. While there are a couple gems here ("The Fallout" and "Halo Man"), there's just too much "rock" shit to wade through. (GBS)

Smoke Recordings, c/o Annie O'Hayon Media, 525 Broadway, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10012, www.soundarte.com

### Others, The - Latest Rendition, CD

Tough and innocent female-fronted rock with quirky pop elements and a very '90s feel. Take Discount, Tilt, and Tuscadero, throw them all on a stage together, and this may be what you get. (MG)  
Bad Rep Records, PO Box 7117, Woodbridge, VA 22195-7117

### Page Ninety Nine - Document #11, 7"

This is a rerelease of two things: a split with R7 and a tour edition 6". The first side is early Pg.99, which is a lot more melodic than the other stuff I've heard of theirs. The other side is a lot darker. This is very much worth picking up. (TK)  
Robotic Empire, 12001 Aintree Lane, Reston, VA 20191, www.roboticempire.com

### Pallin - Far From Yokohama, CD

Who would've thought that a quirky marriage between a guitar and a cello could make such richly textured and lush music? Adding subtle percussion and keyboard/piano, along with an assortment of other instruments, adds to the already robust, jazzy sound. This beautiful record truly captures the essence of music. (BN)  
www.uruworl.com

### Paper Lions - The Symptom And The Sick, CD

I swear I was in a time warp, because this group sounds like they're from the mid- to late-'80s Dischord scene. This is the perfect combination of smooth-sounding yet driving punk with some intricate interludes and breakdowns. The rhythm section keeps the momentum rolling on this moody collection of tracks. Not moody in a dreary, Goth-like way, but like guy down on his luck and on the run. I digress. You can really kind of dance to these guys like the kids do to bands like Radio 4 and Les Savvy Fav. It's crunchy, but has one hell of a beat that gets the feet a moving. This is easily my pick of the bunch this issue. Melodic punk doesn't have to suck; this one completely fucking rocks it out. (DM)  
Kindercore, PO Box 461, Athens, GA 30606, www.kindercore.com

**Pastmistakes, The / Redwinterdying - split, CDEP**

This is an inventive and earnest split overall, with two divergent bands displayed. Pastmistakes are the best emo band I've heard in a while, with solid melodic vocals and a good deal of energy. Redwinterdying mix that same sound with death-metal vocals, making this a unique split. (AE)  
The New Beat, 3100 Sevier Ave., Knoxville, TN 37920, [www.thenewbeat.net](http://www.thenewbeat.net)

**Pere Ubu - 2 Song Tour 2002, 7"**

I dig Pere Ubu, and *30 Seconds Over Tokyo* is a punk-rock classic, but this tour single isn't their greatest work. If you aren't afraid of the artsy-fartsy, buy their box set. With Ubu, you never know, and frankly this would be essential only to the bigger fans. (EA)  
Smog Veil Records, 316 California Ave. #207, Reno, NV 89509, [www.smogveil.com](http://www.smogveil.com)

**Pistol For A Paycheck - At The Pinnacle, CD**

Riff-soaked pop punk with a gritty, garage-rock sound, similar to the sloppy pop punk of the first Goo Goo Dolls release on Metal Blade Records and *Bleach* era Nirvana. It sounds weird, but very much worth the listen. From beginning to end, this is a very solid release. (TK)  
Self-released, [www.pistolforapaycheck.com](http://www.pistolforapaycheck.com)

**Pivot - Where The Debris Meets The Sea, CD**

These six songs have the best production I have heard in some time. Beautifully crafted rock gems—even the lighter tunes pack a good punch. You will probably hear a lot from this band in the future—a shitload better than Creed and all the pseudo-alternative crap on the airwaves these days. (BC)  
[www.purpleskunkrecords.com](http://www.purpleskunkrecords.com)

**Plains, The - On Earth As It Is In Heaven, CD**

The Plains play lively pop, with minor twangs of punk and a fair amount of comedy thrown in for good measure. I recommend this to fans of The Pixies or to fans of REM's better albums. It was recorded on eight-track reel-to-reel, which lends it some extra classiness. (AE)  
Global Seepej, 1907 11th Ave. E., Seattle, WA 98102, [www.theplains.net](http://www.theplains.net)

**Pothast, Dan - Sweets and Meats, CD**

This solo project of the MU330 frontman has quickly garnered the attention of kids everywhere and for good reason. A perfect marriage of acoustic rock, pop and reggae/ska, the melodies Dan writes are full of life that showcase his love and appreciation for music. (BN)  
Asian Man Records, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030, [www.asianmanrecords.com](http://www.asianmanrecords.com)

**Reviewer Spotlight: Bart Niedzialkowski (BN)**

**SQUAT, *It's All Over*.** Those of you that follow my reviews here in *Punk Planet* and on [punkrockreviews.com](http://punkrockreviews.com) know of my infatuation with Squat, an all-girl band that I still consider the standard to compare similar bands against. The group's only LP, *It's All Over*, released in 1996 on New Red Archives, is an aggressive punk-rock romp with urgent melodies, unapologetic lyrics and one of the best female voices in the scene. The production on the record, done by the ladies, leaves the songs rough, raw and bursting with energy. Unfortunately, I never had a chance to see Squat live, but I'm sure that the energy so evident in the studio transferred well to the stage. The lyrics exhibit an angry side dealing with social as well as personal issues with blunt yet poignant words. The dual guitars are vigorous and work really well with the hard-hitting drums and bass lines, creating songs that are both abrasive and melodic. Despite the fact that Squat hasn't been heard from in years, their work remains a blueprint for startup all-girl acts to follow.

**Current Playlist:** Swingin' Utters *Dead Flowers*, Bottles, *Bluegrass and Bones*; V/A, *Old Skars and Upstarts 2002*; Somehow Hollow, *Busted Wings & Rusted Halos*; Rancid *Life Won't Wait*.

**Pretty Mighty Mighty - Normal, CDEP**

Yep, this band makes pretty mighty tunes you can't really dance to but sure can sway about on the floor with. Think mildly affected harmonizations, lots of anterior drumbeats, and the usual quick-slow-quick-quick melodies just about everybody loves. A harmless ride. (SP)  
Deraillleur Records, PO Box 10276, Columbus, OH, 43201, [www.deraillleurrecords.com](http://www.deraillleurrecords.com)

**Protest The Hero - ...Search for the Truth, 7"**

If my info is correct, and I have no reason to doubt it, these guys recorded this when they were 15! I guess that last statement doesn't say much unless you hear the music. It is incredibly well-written melodic hardcore along the lines of a much faster Propagandhi. I am in awe of this record. Just the speed and musicianship are worthy of praise, not to mention the lyrics are pretty intelligent, and the cover art is rad as shit. My only suggestion is possibly cut the two five-minute songs on this 7" into a few more to accommodate the short attention span of most punks. (TK)  
Underground Operations, PO Box 13, Ajax, Ontario, 11s 3c2 Canada, [www.undergroundoperations.com](http://www.undergroundoperations.com)

**Prowl, The - What Are You Doing?, 7"**

The art for this 7" is creepy. On the front, there is a drawing of a girl screaming. On the back is a split drawing of a knife cutting up a fish and a knife cutting through a naked woman's body (with a skull in the background). "Practice Makes Perfect" is written below. The lyrics are equally creepy, but in a funny way. Fast-paced early '80s hardcore would be my best description of their music. Bonus! They close with a cover of Necros' "Conquest For Death." (TK)  
Gloom Records, PO Box 14253, Albany, NY 12212, [www.gloomrecords.com](http://www.gloomrecords.com)

**Punchbuggy - The Great Divide, CD**

With its Top 40 feel, this record could be the indie version of the *Monster Ballads* collection. It's got a load of guitar solos and anthemic sing-along-ability in this butt-rocker kinda way. (AA)  
Does Everyone Stare? PO Box 35004, Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 2R8, Canada, [www.doeseveryone-stare.com](http://www.doeseveryone-stare.com)

**Putrescine - S/T, CDEP**

After getting over my initial annoyance at not being able to decipher from the packaging what this band or their CD was called, I grew to really enjoy this record. Screamy, frenetic, short and sweet (it clocks in at just over 22 minutes), urgent, heavy, tight, ravaged—recommended. (JD)  
3 Bay Hopper, PO Box 241709, Omaha, NE 68124

**Raised Fist - Dedication, CD**

With all the hype surrounding Division Of Laura Lee and Ikara Colt, I approached Raised Fist with caution. Epitaph seems to be pimping the Swedes like nobody's business, but there's nothing remotely garagey or retro about *Dedication*. Raised Fist's sound is of the moment. The precise drum beats are brutal, the solid guitar crunch is reminiscent of early Sick Of It All, and the vocals spit out like machine-gun bursts. Alexander's throaty growls grant a calculated urgency to his social philosophy of revolution sung over the relentless sound of his bandmates beating their instruments. The only reminiscing going on here comes from their shout outs to the kids keeping the faith and downloading MP3s (that's right, the kids rocking the MP3s). Solid and sick, Raised Fist's brand of dark wave tinged Swedish hardcore is likely to please fans of both Gorilla Biscuits and SPF 1000. (GBS)  
Burning Heart Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, [www.burningheart.com](http://www.burningheart.com)

**Ramallah - But A Whimper, CD**

Brutal hardcore from the frontman of Blood For Blood and Sinners & Saints, chock full of aggressive melodies and a message that's sure to raise some eyebrows. Ramallah refuse to hold back, cutting loose a sonic onslaught that is matched by the vicious (yet truthful) commentary on the modern world. (BN)  
Bridge Nine Records, PO Box 990052 Boston, MA 02199-0052, [www.bridge9.com](http://www.bridge9.com)

**Rants - Look Passive, 7"**

Fifteen years ago, this would have been called "college rock." Ten years ago, this would have been called "alternative." In 2003, I call this four tracks of elementary song writing, played mostly acoustically by a bunch of hippies who won't be able to give away all 500 they pressed. (EA)  
Burro Records, PO Box 803, Davison, MI 48423, [www.mp3.com/the\\_rants](http://www.mp3.com/the_rants)

**Rat Race Driver - Meet Rat Race Driver, CDR**

If they got rid of the spooky instrumental tracks and just left the almost spoken-word musical tracks, they'd have something as dark and disturbing as a good David Lynch film. Nevertheless, a keeper. (AS)  
Self-released, [ratrace@toadmail.com](mailto:ratrace@toadmail.com)

**Ratos De Porão - Onisciente Coletivo, CD**

Twenty years since their debut album, São Paulo's Ratos De Porão still kick ass. More hardcore than metal, this is a rare album that punks and longhairs



can agree to love. The lyrics are political, but not heavy-handed, and cover important topics like globalization and the ills of U.S. imperialism. (AE) Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092, [www.alternativetentacles.com](http://www.alternativetentacles.com)

**Razors Never Die – Breadcrumbs To The Birds, CD**  
An Undertones cover, a pop-punk hit, a snotty hardcore cut and sense of humor to match. Yeah, all that from a band I've never heard of, but, after hearing this EP, wish I had. It's good to see a band playing music for the fun and love of it. (BN) Self-released, PO Box 1156, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

**Rebelation – Yo Swing Dat Mama, CD**  
Rebelation provides 14 tracks of roots reggae/ska that reminds me of the Beat at times, but more wholesome-sounding. Duel male and female vocals deliver quality goods to skank to, but it's kind of sugar-coated. If you dig second wave, this will make the kids swing it. (DM) Do The Dog Music, 26A Craven Rd., Newbury, Berks RG14 5NE, [kevindothedog@yahoo.com](mailto:kevindothedog@yahoo.com)

**Remember The Ocean - Ruth, CD**  
Two words: Lilith Fair. The female-fronted songs are pretty, and the lyrics are sensitively poetic, but it all adds up to the kind of alternarock that leaves me thinking of the co-ops back in college. It's nice enough for fans of melodic folk, but I kept wishing for a few more tempo changes. (AT) Self-released, [www.remembertheocean.com](http://www.remembertheocean.com)

**Riffs, The - Underground Kicks, CD**  
Here's the much-needed reissue of The Riffs' first album. As always with these garage-rock greats from Portland, the vocals are beautifully off-key, and the lyrics are concerned with the rocker lifestyle and drugs. Riffs fans already own this, but there's no better introduction for newcomers than *Underground Kicks*. (AE) TKO Records, 3216 W. Cary St., #303, Richmond, VA 23221, [www.tkorecords.com](http://www.tkorecords.com)

9 **Riot99 – Last Train To Nowhere, CD**  
Great music springs from the creation of exciting new sonic formulas, communication of innovative new ideas, or clever expressions of classic forms and themes. Riot99 have none of the aforementioned qualities. On all fronts, *Last Train To Nowhere* is insulting. From the opening air-raid siren to

the women moaning in orgasm in the final track, Riot99 are one cliché after another. Songs about riots, social disorder, girls, booze, girls, drugs, girls, and oh yeah, riots. Left and right, the riffs are ripped off Stiff Little Fingers, *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's The Sex Pistols*, and the first Clash record. The lyrical content moves from meandering social commentary ("Destroy The City," "Cancer In Society," "Rise Above") to frat-boy party mentality ("On The Tracks" and "Self Destruct") and eventually deteriorates into base cock rock: "I know it's a dirty habit but I like to fuck nuns/ Slip her a length and pork her till she cums," sings Drew on "Nun-Fucker." Lyrics like "wet spread peach in my face/ squirting Mickey Juice all over the place" just makes me feel dirty. If slow, Spirit of '77 rock coupled with Johnny Rotten alliterations is your thing—well, you probably don't read *Punk Planet* anyway. (GBS) Longshot Music / Scratch Records, 726 Richards St., Vancouver, BC V6B 3A4, Canada, [www.longshotmusic.com](http://www.longshotmusic.com), [www.scratchrecords.com](http://www.scratchrecords.com)

**Rizzudo – S/T, CD**  
Prog-styled math rock that stays aggressive and interesting. They use the traditional power-trio instruments, but they also lay on the effects with the occasional well-placed vocals, a Moog and a Roland Juno 60. When it gets too spacey, they hammer out a hard one. An incredible seven-song EP. (DM) Moodswing Records, c/o Charles Petrakopoulos, 3833 Roswell Road, Ste. 104, Atlanta, GA 30342, [www.moodswingrecords.com](http://www.moodswingrecords.com)

**Rolemodels, The / Sister Mary Rotten Crotch - Wrecked, split CD**  
For being from Chicago and Kansas City, The Rolemodels and Sister Mary Rotten Crotch sound an awful lot like early '80s Los Angeles-flavored melodic punk. Hooligan Empire Records' premiere release, *Wrecked* is heavy on nostalgia for solid rock 'n' roll beats and scratchy vocals. (GBS) Hooligan Empire Records, PO Box 10024, Kansas City, MO 64171, [www.hooliganempirerecords.com](http://www.hooliganempirerecords.com)

**Rubikon – Awaken, CD**  
I dig the complete D.I.Y. ethic of doing a really well-crafted CD on your own, and I'm sure *Kerrang!* magazine would absolutely love this release, but

this is "*Punk Planet*. I'm sure Chevelle, Saliva, Godsmack or STP would love you for an opening act. I promise they will... (DM) Self-released, [www.rubikon.com](http://www.rubikon.com)

**Ruffians, The - Together For Christmas, CDEP**  
This silly EP is a small batch of punky Irish Christmas tunes. It's neither as cheesy as Flogging Molly nor as hard as Dropkick Murphys, but it's definitely a sign of the Irish punk times. This gimmicky EP is going to please anyone into both Irish music and punk. (AE) Intercultural Niche Strategies, 11 Broadway, Ste. 1063, New York, NY 10004, [www.nichestrategies.com](http://www.nichestrategies.com)

**Rumblers, The – Hold On Tight, CD**  
As one might assume from the cover photo of three dudes with lots of hair gel, this record is straight-up rockabilly punk. Semisnarly Mike Ness-type vocals over poorly recorded guitar lines, but not bad at all, once you get past the slight squeal of high-end feedback on the recording. Extra credit for tight vocal harmonies. (JC) Switchblade, PO Box 266, Pedricktown, NJ 08067

**Running Like Thieves – Same Time Next Year, CDEP**  
Not necessarily youth crew, but six mature songs, with old-school NYHC-style leanings. It had me searching for my long lost copy of the first Sick Of It All album. (AS) Livewire Records, PO Box 007, Mendham, NJ 07945, [www.livewire-records.com](http://www.livewire-records.com)

**Saddest Landscape, The – Cover Your Heart, 7"**  
Not quite hardcore, but spiked with a smidge of metal-infused punk power, The Saddest Landscape is a band that loves to spread the noise. But since their compelling vibe is slightly overshadowed by vastly unintelligible vocals, please rely on printed lyrics to appreciate the band's charisma. (SP) Copter Crash Records, PO Box 6095, Hudson, FL 34667, [www.coptercrash.com](http://www.coptercrash.com)

**Saigot - Handle, CD**  
You know the guy on open-mic night who bravely shares his minimalist, bass-driven solo songs? The one whose music is admirably experimental and emotional, but ultimately makes you want to sneak out the door? Well, he's made a CD. (AT) Spare Chant, 801 Hebron Pkwy, #6101, Lewisville, TX 75057, [spare\\_chant@hotmail.com](mailto:spare_chant@hotmail.com)

#### Reviewer Spotlight: Sonia Pereira (SP)

V/A, *Alright, This Time, Just The Girls*. A few summers ago, I found myself in a pretty lame record store somewhere in Provincetown. After looking disappointedly at the poor selection of dumb mainstream crap and the usual record bin of used Happy Mondays CDs, I decided to trek on over to the compilations section. Thank heavens I did, because there I found one of the coolest V/A CDs ever. While I tend to be a sucker for anything that Sympathy For The Record Industry puts out, I have to stress just how damn awesome this compilation actually is. For one, it's got the prettiest packaging, what with its Ryden cover art and handy booklet featuring pics of Bardot and the evil chick from *The Bad Seed*. Not to mention that the thing includes 40-plus female-fronted bands that are *all* good. If you realize how difficult finding a decent V/A CD is, then you must understand the rarity of a 100 percent groovilicious compilation. Featured performers include Lunachicks, Trinket, The Friggs, Candypanthers, The Muffs, and a pre-Versace-obsessed Hole. And if that ain't enough to tempt you, there's also frickin' yummy songs by Thee Headcoatees, Stool Pigeons, The Eyeliners, Holly Golightly and one of the toughest bands ever, Detroit Cobras. Ohmygosh, this album rules my world. Thank you SFTRI, thanks all you cool girls. Blessed be all your rowdy guitars, screaming wails, and flying hair. Oh, and did I mention the Geraldine Fibbers are on this too? Holy mama yes they are.

**When I get up I listen to:** Rilo Kiley, *Execution Of All Things*; Catatonia, *Equally Cursed And Blessed*; Nina Simone, *Nina Simone and Piano*; Tom Waits, *Swordfishtrombones*; Esquivel, *Cabaret Manana*; V/A, *Elvira's Haunted Hits*.

**Scene Creamers – Suck On That Emotion, CD**

The latest incarnation of the underground's best quick-change artist, Ian Svenonius, is perhaps his most oblique—and after how many cryptic Make-Up albums, that's really saying a lot. Long gone is the free-jazz-inspired lo-fi rock of the Nation Of Ulysses and equally cast aside is the white-boy gospel blues of the Make-Up. Svenonius' latest mask is that of psychedelic funk rocker. Scene Creamers is less of a break from the Make Up as the Make Up were from the Nation, but it still feels like a new band instead of a continuation. But this fuzzed-out, '70s-inspired rock/funk sound, which has wormed its way through parts of the underground during the past couple years, isn't ground-breaking in the same way Svenonius' previous projects did. (DS)  
 Drag City, PO Box 476867 Chicago, IL 60647, www.dragcity.com

**Scenic – The Acid Gospel Experience, CD**

This modern composition is proggy, instrumental space-desert-post-rock with treated guitar lines that shimmer and melt, *Star Trek*-like keyboards (sometimes), and, on some cuts, fast, decisive rock drumming and percussion by a guy named Brock Wirtz. (Did his parents name him that?) Other core members are guitarist Bruce Licher (Savage Republic) and bassist James Brenner (Shiva Burlesque), with guest piano from important elder ambient composer Harold Budd (Brian Eno, Cocteau Twins, XTC's Andy Partridge). They also use glockenspiel, lap steel, elbow, chamberlin, moog and synths. With much variety among the album's nine compositions, the 73-minute disc hangs together as one project, sounding like an amalgam of a Kranky release, something Constellation would release, American Analog Set, The Fucking Champs and George Harrison. (The sitar adds a nice touch.) Perhaps add Satie to the mix, if you can imagine such a melange. Some cuts rock with fuzz, some have the light, cerebral touch of the vibraphone, and others evoke the ambient peace of an arid wasteland. But all are hypnotic, treading lightly at the edge of psychedelia. The elegant cardboard "discfolio" arouses interest to peek inside. Very nice work, this. It earns respect and sounds really good. (JS)  
 Hidden Agenda Records, 303 W. Griggs St., Urbana, IL 61801

**Reviewer Spotlight: Kyle Ryan (KR)**

*Ten Songs That Made Me Punk Rock, Part I.* Around age 15, I started to drift away from the industrial music I once loved in favor of a new mistress, punk rock. Here are the first five of 10 songs that ushered in that new era at the beginning of the 1990s (in no particular order): 1) "I'm Not Afraid," Face To Face. I loved this song, still do—so much in fact I named my old zine after it. Amazing melodic punk with one of the best "big guitar" sounds I've ever heard on a record. 2) "In My Eyes," Minor Threat. Yet another private-school-rebellion anthem from the pioneers of hard core. It was perfect for a time in my life where I felt like telling everyone to fuck off: "You tell me that I make no difference / well at least I'm fucking trying / what the fuck have you done?" 3) NOFX, "Nowhere." Although the *punknoscenti* turn their noses up at NOFX, there's no denying the power of their older records. This is a furious melodic punk song indicting the Cold War, which ended before the record was released. 4) Fugazi, "Waiting Room." What's there to explain? 5) Jawbreaker, "Want." I'll never forget the first time I heard this song. It was poppy (but not dopey) and punk with a sensitive edge that knocked me off my feet.

**Keepin' It Real:** David Cross, *Shut Up, You Fucking Baby!*; David Sedaris box set; Q And Not U, *Different Damage*; J Church, *Palestine*; Jawbox, *My Scrapbook Of Fatal Accidents*

**Scissorfight – Potential New Agent For Unconventional Warfare, CD**

Here we have some post-Soundgarden hard rock with a southern-fried bluesy twist. Heavy, loud, trashy, and ready to be played on your local alternative radio station in between Nickelback and Creed. (MG)  
 Tortuga Recordings, PO Box 15608, Boston, MA 02215, www.tortugarecordings.com

**Screwballs – What's Next, CDR**

This three-song EP is a precursor to their full-length coming out sometime soon. They're really good, fast, in your face, Propagandhi-ish tunes with horns, and you can put this in your computer and read up on their discography, bio and see a video of them. (DM)  
 Self-released, www.screwballs.net

**Scuttle – Fireworks For Summer, CDEP**

So obviously influenced by Hot Water and Alkaline Trio, it's almost painful, Scuttle's melodic emo from across the pond is solid nevertheless. A quick, five-song EP, the music is less about juxtaposed dynamics than it is about strong hooks and call-out harmonies. (GBS)  
 Firefly Recordings, PO Box 30179, London, E17 5FE, UK, www.fireflyrecordings.com

**Sea And Cake, The – One Bedroom, CD**

The Sea And Cake are one of those bands like Lungfish or the Jesus Lizard: They have one really great song that they keep recording over and over. Like those other two bands, The Sea And Cake's song is so great that you want to hear it each time. I fully believe that you could take the Pepsi Challenge on 95 percent of The Sea And Cake's tunes and not be able to place song with album. But it's fine, really, because each time you hear one of their airy, modern, pulsing songs—so light they honestly seem like they'll float away if you don't hold them down—you just can't help but fall in love with it all over again. (DS)  
 Thrill Jockey Records, PO Box 08038, Chicago, IL 60608, www.thrilljockey.com

**Second Story Man – Pins and Needles, CD**

A collection of "nice" indie-rock songs with vocals shared among everyone (two female, two male). Lots of harmonies complement the music that has many time changes, quirkiness and real pop sensibility, without really being a pop band. All the tunes are organic and grow on you as you listen. (DM)  
 Landmark Recordings, PO Box 5177, Louisville, KY 40255, www.landmarkrecordings.com

**Seeger Liberation Army – Heavy Music, 7"**

It's a Detroit superstar cast doing Bob Seger covers—what the hell else do you want? Tommy Potter (lead vocals) from Bantam Rooster/Dirtbombs may be no Seger, but he gives the soul justice. Jim Diamond from Ghetto Recorders/Dirtbombs blasts guitars and organs. Fred Beldin of El Smasho fills in with more guitars. Jim Weber of New Bomb Turks lays down the bass, and Pat Pantano of the Dirtbombs plays drums. Did I tell you it was a Detroit superstar cast or what? Nothing is really as pathetic as a bunch of drunks who get together and record these two covers, "Heavy Music" and "Chain Smoking." Seems like a good idea I am sure, and with Jim Diamond owning one of the best studios in the country, it sounds top notch. What's great is that Big Neck put this out. So where is the LP? (EA)  
 Big Neck Records, PO Box 8144, Reston, VA 20196, www.bigneckrecords.com

**Sergeants Mess – When You Were Mine, 7"**

Another sloppy, one-off recording released in an attempt to cash in on the garage revival, Sergeants Mess, in all their forgivable Britishness, sound like the Monkees covering the Beach Boys. (GBS)  
 Smartguy Records of North America, 3288 21st St., PMB # 32, San Francisco, CA 94110, www.smartguyrecords.com

**Selfish – Cry For Love, Cry For Death, CD**

The cover of this one (fire, the devil and a naked lady) had me thinking this was going to be death metal. Actually, Finland's Selfish play some average crusty hardcore with a little thrash thrown in the mix. The vocalist sounds like he's vomiting. These guys get the thumbs down. (KM)  
 DeadAlive, PO Box 42593, Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.deadaliverecords.com

**Setting Sun – Holed Up, CD**

The songs on Setting Sun's debut album, *Holed Up*, are darkly personal and aurally powerful. Yet they are also warm, with a novel sound that manages to be tuneful and pretty against quiet-to-loud dynamics. These odd anti-folk-rock ballads are all about unexpected minor chord progressions, backed by lovely, ethereal (and sometimes experimental) instrumentation that fills out and lends a contradictory polish to the album's roughened sounds. There's cello and vox besides guitar, bass, keyboards and drums. Pretty consistent across its 12 interesting tracks, the album was self-produced and self-



released by multi-instrumentalist Gary Levitt. It sounds as though it has label money behind it, but it doesn't. It's a very strong debut—and a keeper. (JS) Setting Sun, 244 East First, #220, Los Angeles, CA 90012, [www.settingsuntheband.com](http://www.settingsuntheband.com)

#### Shipping News – Three Four, CD

Members of this trio have played in similar-sounding bands such as the Rachels, Rodan, and June of 44. This, their second full-length, is full of complex rhythms and repetitive riffs, giving off a subtle urgency that I wouldn't expect in such relaxing music. Fans of "slowcore" will fall in love with this stuff. Quarterstick Records, PO Box 25342, Chicago, IL 60625, [www.southern.com](http://www.southern.com)

#### Signedso – S/T, CD

I did not enjoy this aural guitar-pop mishmash. The lack of dynamics makes it too difficult to hear what's going on with each song, but I think it's your standard college bar rock. (AT) Sunset Alliance, PO Box 32048, Mesa, AZ 85275, [www.sunsetalliance.net](http://www.sunsetalliance.net)

#### Simpatico – The Boy Is Mine, CDEP

Simpatico delivers moody and winding songs, heavy on the electro drums and keyboard. Rather pleasant sounds, in a Sarah Records or Slumberland vein. Includes a cover of Electric Light Orchestra's "Steppin' Out." This will definitely be in heavy rotation. (JG) Gifted Records, PO BOX 34, Gordon, NSW 2072, Australia, [www.giftedrecords.net](http://www.giftedrecords.net)

#### 63 Crayons – Spread The Love, CDEP

Sixties-style pop with some "ba ba ba's" and some spacey background noises. It's pretty simple, but catchy. If you like the Beach Boys, The Mamas And The Papas, or early Beatles, but don't like your bands drugged up or dead, then check these guys out. (NS) HHBTM, PO Box 1035, Panama City, FL 32402, [www.hhbtm.com](http://www.hhbtm.com)

#### Skinjobs – Burn Your Rainbow, CD

Catchy, queer-based punk-rock band searches for meaning in a lifestyle overrun with rainbow-flag waving complacent conformists. They sound like they'd be a fun live show, and I'd love to see a big crowd singing along to "Recruiting"! It also has fun spoken-word bonus tracks. (AS) Agitprop! Records, PO Box 748, Hanover, MA 02339, [www.agitproprecords.com](http://www.agitproprecords.com)

#### Reviewer Spotlight: George Sanchez (GBS)

THE CLASH—*Sandinista!* Released one year after *London Calling*, *Sandinista!* was a sprawling triple record that dove head first into rap, Motown, dub reggae, rockabilly, punk, gospel, bebop, calypso, and rap. It also brought attention to Nicaragua's struggle for independence from the Somoza Dynasty. But to many listeners, the 36-track record was just too much. Twenty-three years later, a lot of folks still don't know what to make of this behemoth. The Clash themselves made excuses for *Sandinista!*; Joe Strummer hailed it, at its worst, as a document of one moment, and Mick Jones conceded it would've been better as a double. But if you listen closely, you'll find the sound of transition and artistic exploration. The Clash was no longer the same band who penned "Career Opportunities" three years earlier. The personal desperation of dole lines and pent-up frustration had manifest itself in other, global concerns. Why sing about career opportunities when they'd witnessed first-hand the influence of punk on society? The opportunity for a new world was there; it was up to you to grab it. Musically, *Sandinista!* is fascinating because it's the beginning of a creative peak from musicians who had been playing together for so long. Each was in concert with the other's slightest move. The Clash was so musically uninhibited that *Sandinista!* is more an experiment than record. In that freedom, the Clash created music that has aged better than any other record they've released.

**En La Casa:** The Atomic Men, *Bomb Shelter Boogie*; Fabulous Disaster, *Panty Raid!*; Robert Johnson, *The Complete Recordings*; Raised Fist, *Dedication*; The Devil Makes Three, *S/T*.

#### Slapshot – Greatest Hits, Slashes and Crosschecks, CD

In Boston, there are a few constants: The Sox will never win the World Series; Evacuation Day is a self-proclaimed holiday; no one pronounces Rs; Dunkin Donuts and Starbucks are used as landmarks in all directions; and Slapshot. Since 1985, Slapshot has forged the face of hXc music in Boston and around the world. No band hits or plays harder or tougher, and with 22 tracks, that equals the force of a puck to the teeth. Mind you, they have the Boston hXc curse of sounding a bit metal at times, but these little ditties have been redone to prove that they get better with age. With classics like "Back On The Map," "Firewalker," and "In Your Face," there is nothing better if you want a piece of punk-rock history or a sound that remains fresh even now. If you've never heard Slapshot, shame on you, motherfucker. This is a band that helped set the standard for what we call "tough-guy hXc." This is a great place to start—hell, even finish. Cream of the crop. Amen. (DM) Bridge Nine Records, PO Box 990052, Boston, MA 02199-0052, [www.bridge9.com](http://www.bridge9.com)

#### Small Brown Bike / Casket Lottery, The—split, CD

This isn't your typical split; it has a song written by Small Brown Bike with Casket Lottery vocals and vice versa. Then there's one song by each band proper and combined cover of "Under Pressure." Well-done, heavier postpunk that rises above emo's trappings. (KR) Second Nature Recordings, PO Box 11543, Kansas City, MO 64138, [www.secondnaturerecordings.com](http://www.secondnaturerecordings.com)

#### (Smog) - Accumulation: None, CD

This very satisfying compilation of unreleased and obscure b-sides spans Bill Callahan's 10-year career, representing its different phases and their unique sounds and themes. Whatever phase the author of "Teenage Spaceship" is in, nobody sounds or communicates quite like Callahan. Wicked smart, the beguiling simplicity and economy of language with which he illustrates complex meanings always stuns you, as does his experimental (yet country-tinged) songwriting. Those songs' razor-sharp edge cuts to the bone, though his tender side is just as piercing. All of it is full of meaning—love, bitterness, sorrow, and many other unmistakably authentic emotions—yet never, ever maudlin. On his acoustic reworking of "Cold Blooded Old Times" he sings, "And though you

were just a little squirrel/ You understood every word/ And in this way/ They gave you clarity/ A cold-blooded clarity." Callahan understands some things other songwriters just don't. The second track, "A Hit," is his trademark deconstructive, mordant humor. He sings, "It's not gonna be a hit/ So why even bother/ With it?" With his world-weary sneer, Callahan can seem spiteful. But at the end of the day, when you put on any of his albums, he's like a comforting old friend singing directly to you. Thank goodness for (Smog). (JS) Drag City, PO Box 476867, Chicago, IL 60647, [www.dragcity.com](http://www.dragcity.com)

#### Smoke Like A Fish – S/T, CD

A very solid UK ska debut, this is more for fans of traditional ska than punk-ska outfits like Less Than Jake. This eight-piece two-tone band exhibits an elevated lyrical style not commonly found in ska, and the instrumentals are tight all around. Highly recommended for the ska fan in your basement. (AE) Do The Dog Music, 26a Craven Rd., Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 5NE, England, [www.smoke-likeafish.co.uk](http://www.smoke-likeafish.co.uk)

#### Snowdogs – Deep Cuts, Fast Remedies, CD

Six years ago, this would have never been released by Victory Records. It's pop punk that's more upbeat than the stuff Drive Thru puts out. I predict Snowdogs will be opening for the Goo Goo Dolls soon. How did this happen? What—a major almost bought out the label? Oh. (GBS) Victory Records, 346 N. Justine St., Ste 504, Chicago, IL 60607, [www.victoryrecords.com](http://www.victoryrecords.com)

#### Somehow Hollow – Busted Wings & Rusted Halos, CD

When Grade called it quits, this side-project rose out of its ashes to help the kids heal. This debut finds the four-piece pouring out their hearts with their trademark "not quite post-hardcore" sound. It's full of emotional vocals, revealing lyrics, and upbeat melodies that hint at metal influences. (BN) Victory Records, 346 N. Justine St., Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607, [www.victoryrecords.com](http://www.victoryrecords.com)

#### Songs:Ohia - Magnolia Electric Co., CD

If only it weren't a cold, dismal February in Chicago at the time of this writing. This could be the soundtrack of back in the days where I'd lazily lounge on my porch in the sweltering North Carolina summers, watching the sun set, drinking cheap beer, and happily greeting

the townfolk strolling by. "What's goin' on?" "Nuthin'" "Yuuuup" "Uh-huh" Reminiscent of classic roots rock of Bob Seger with the textured tone of Neil Young, Jason Molina and his backing band create lap-steel-heavy, laid-back rock with a drawl without a hint of irony—which goes against today's trends. The arrangements are bleakly complex, laced with beautiful harmonies, and the dynamics waver as delicately as Molina's work-weary voice. The song themes focus around the simple life, free of urban complexities and filled with slow paced livin'. Surprisingly, this was recorded by Steve Albini, and the production is crisp yet warm, like your well-worn slab of vinyl. Find me a stoop, some chill companions, crank this record, and I'll show up with a case in no time. (VC) Secretly Canadian, 1021 South Walnut, Bloomington, IN 47401, [www.secretlycanadian.com](http://www.secretlycanadian.com)

#### Spengler—We Need A Miracle, CD

Indie rock with a punch, Spengler's music likes to de-emphasize convention with varied instrumentation (bagpipes on track 3?), noodley guitar and more. All songs have dueling vocals, and the harmonies often don't work. The songs eventually start to sound repetitious, and 44 minutes seems like a lot longer. (KR)

Blue Skies Turn Black, 214 Thornhill, DDO, QC H9G 1P7, Canada, [www.blueskiesturnblack.com](http://www.blueskiesturnblack.com)

#### Squirtgun / Teen Idols – The Dysfunctional Shadowman, split CD

A lot of bands have been doing the Ramones/Queers/Screeching Weasel thing for a long, long time now. Here are two of the better acts with two songs each. Catchy, simple and energetic pop-punk with hooks sharp enough to maim. It's been done before, but rarely this good. (BN) Asian Man Records, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030, [www.asianmanrecords.com](http://www.asianmanrecords.com)

#### Stellenbosch – We Used To Build Towers In The Basement, CDEP

The screamo craze has spread to The Netherlands, and Stellenbosch bust out four intensely vocalized hardcore tunes here. With a song titled "Put Your Chubby Arms Around Me," they can stand toe to toe with any band in this genre. (AS) Self-released, [www.alaskaontwerp.nl/noel/stellenbosch/](http://www.alaskaontwerp.nl/noel/stellenbosch/)

#### ♫ Stiffed – Sex Sells, CDEP

Please forget that you ever heard that overcommercialized crap band No Doubt. Now go out and get this CDEP from Philly's Stiffed. What you will find

here is a band that seems to draw its influences from great '70s/'80s bands like The Police, Missing Persons, and The Pretenders, to name a few. The singer is this woman named Santi White, and she is unbelievable. Her voice takes you back to the new-wave bands of the '80s along with the power of the late '70s punk bands. It's the voice of a woman you'd want to sleep with but would be afraid she'd beat the crap out of you for coming too fast. The guitars have cool mod English feel to them. The six songs all have a personality of their own, and the CDEP leaves you wanting more and more. The band seems to like what they are doing, regardless if the sound is "in" or not. Good for them. As it is, we should come to them and get into their groove. Damn fine music from a town that has a damn fine hockey team! (BC)

Cool Hunter, no contact information provided

#### Stitches, The – Automatic, 7"

Three cool rock 'n' roll songs from four dirty old men who have been playing sloppy Dolls-style rock 'n' roll since before anybody can remember. Snotty and ugly, there are no clean edges to this rag-tag outfit. It wouldn't surprise me if The Stitches don't know about the Hives. (GBS)

TKO Records, 3126 W. Cary St., #303, Richmond, VA 23221, [www.tkorecords.com](http://www.tkorecords.com)

#### Stitches, The – 12 Imaginary Inches, CD

According to the promo sheet, this band was voted in the top 10 punk bands by *Spin* magazine. Well, I can agree that *Spin* isn't always on the ball, but this band is good at serving you up some fine '70s-style snotty punk. Great, noisy guitar work and some vocals with attitude are showcased on these 12 fine songs. (BC)

TKO Records, 3126 W. Cary St., #303, Richmond, VA 23221, [www.tkorecords.com](http://www.tkorecords.com)

#### ♫ Stockyard Stoics – S/T, CD

The Stockyard Stoics give you a great Clash/Buzzcocks/Stiff Little Fingers vibe. It may be lame to cite bands in a review, but honestly I mean it as the highest compliment. Supposedly Go-Kart was going to release this, but the band broke up. They are back together now and released this self-titled debut themselves. The music is very tight, fast and hook-laden. Unfortunately their website isn't as listed in their CD booklet, and I can't find much more about this Brooklyn band in time for this review. According to the press sheet, they are touring in 2000-2001(?). Even though the Stockyard

Stoics are a slippery bunch, this disc really belongs in the collection of street punk and 1977-style punks. (EA)

Roots Rock Rebel Records, 805 Broadway #1, Brooklyn, NY 11206, [rebel\\_records@hotmail.com](mailto:rebel_records@hotmail.com)

#### Straight To Your Brain – Swingers, Winos, And Sunday School Teachers, CD

FANTASTICAL! Musically a little bit hoarse and screechy, Straight To Your Brain is like Nation Of Ulysses, but intentionally funny! I love it, even though I developed a pounding headache about half way through the record. Straight to your brain, for real. (JG) Almost Good Music, PO Box 2233, Fond du Lac, WI 54936-2233, [www.almostgoodmusic.com](http://www.almostgoodmusic.com)

#### Subincision – Berkeley's Newest Hitmakers, CD

The reissue of this 1997 record from this goofy band is appropriately titled given the fact that they were "all the rage" in the Bay Area when it came out. Sounds like a faster/happier version of AFL, with an upbeat tempo and catchy vocals. Featuring the un-PC classic "Tranny Love." (AE) Substandard, PO Box 310, Berkeley, CA 94701, [www.substandard.com](http://www.substandard.com)

#### Subincision – Jingo, CD

Anthemic songs that are not street punk, just punk with a poppier sound and some keyboards thrown in at times. Too wimpy for the hXc crowd, too punk for the new wavers, and too silly for the street crowd. Subincision are 'tweeners, a band without a home that sounds too good to be lost. (EA) Substandard, PO Box 310, Berkeley, CA 94701, [www.substandard.com](http://www.substandard.com)

#### Subincision – S/T, CD

A damn fine punk band from California releases its debut CD. Sure we have heard this before, but maybe you are sick of overproduced, poppy punk. This is really fun sing-a-long punk like 20 or so years after the first wave of it, but it's still fun after all these years. Check out the lyrics for "I2 Pack Girlfriend." (BC) Substandard, PO Box 310, Berkeley, CA 94701, [www.substandard.com](http://www.substandard.com)

#### Sugar Daddie – Hell Or High Water, CD

I like the band Clutch a lot. However, their first two records were enough—I don't need any Clutch knock-off bands (see track three), even if they sometimes remind me of Sheer Terror. But if you lack a need for originality, you'll fucking love this band. (DM) Thorp Records, PO Box 6786, Toledo, OH 43612, [www.thorprecords.com](http://www.thorprecords.com)

#### Reviewer Spotlight: Patrick Sayers (PS)

JAWBOX, *S/T*. Not a day has gone by the past few months that a Jawbox record hasn't made its way into my headphones. More specifically, their self-titled swan song has remained in continual rotation since high school. Released at the tail end of the mid-'90s signing frenzy, this album couldn't have come out at a worse time. Of course we know what kind of crud passed as punk on the radio then, as well as how "unpunk" it was for any band to put out a major-label record (especially if your band name began with "jaw"). Not even the totally '90s hidden Tori Amos cover was gonna keep this afloat. Anyway, I urge you to scour the used CD section of your local store to give this album a shot. The vocals have never sounded better, and J.'s incredible lyrics are still ever present with some great secondary vocals by Bill Barbot. As usual, there's no fucking with this rhythm section. Kim's bass sounds as if it's being played through a Mack truck engine, merging perfectly with Zach Borocas' subtly spastic drum patterns. Few bands have made punk sound this beautiful while still allowing it to maintain its strength.

**Also Listening to:** The new Joan Of Arc; The Fall, *Hex Enduction Hour*; Cornelius, *Point*; Nas, *God's Son*; Bad Wizard, *Sophisticated Mouth*; Scorpions, *Blackout*; The Party Of Helicopters, *Mt. Forever*.



**Superstrings For Superfriends – Fantastimo, CD**

Six heavy, emoish songs from this new band, like Pink Floyd meets Jane's Addiction at the Warped Tour. At times the guitar tone and vocal screams get annoying, but a lot of kids like that shit in their emo. (BC)

Universal Constant, 1400 S. Ave. E., Ste. 4, Portales, NM 88130, [www.universalconstantrecords.com](http://www.universalconstantrecords.com)

**9 Sweep The Leg Johnny / Rumah Sakit – Live September 9, 2000, 2xCD**

I remember how I was supposed to make this show. My flight coming back to San Francisco from Boston was late, so I missed it. Man, I was so pissed, but now I'm able to experience it. The few times I saw RS while living in the Bay Area, I was always amazed by how magnificent they were, like a hornet gliding along beautifully. At times, with or without notice, they would completely rock out while keeping their jazz-like grace and not missing a beat. RS were a thing of beauty, and this live recording is amazing. STLJ, on the other hand, is a wall of noise, like a bull in a china shop. They must be heard to be believed. Two parts punk, one part math, one part crazy fucking saxophone, add in the occasional vocals (make it a double), and you have the driving force known as STLJ! This is amazing on so many levels; it's a "must have," hands down. (DM)

Sickroom Records, PO Box 47830, Chicago, IL 60647, [www.sickroomrecords.com](http://www.sickroomrecords.com)

**Sylvie – Wish I Was Driving, CD**

Mid-'90s era emoish pop rock. Driving guitar lines and simmering, sometimes screamy, heartfelt vocals, if you like that sort of thing. They do a serviceable job to the genre, and even sparkle a bit on "The Reason Why" and "Pixel." (JG)

Aritica Music, 2674 McDonald St., Regina, Saskatchewan, S4N 2Z8, Canada

**9 Taking Pictures - Friends Are Ghosts, CD**

Taking Pictures' *Friends Are Ghosts* is emoish and verges on mathy. Fast, disjointed (dare I say jazzy?) drums, ringing guitar and emo-style vocals drive the music, but the bass is often hard to hear. Some songs use pounding repetition, as with "Hibernation For A Hyper-Nation" ("I'm not here/ I'm not here/ I'm not here," etc.), that's distantly related to Michael Gira's (Swans) use of the same technique. The songs would benefit from editing and carving out more defined parts for

tighter construction. As it stands, it's hard to hear what the band is after, and tighter focus will bring out sounds presently hidden. It's a question of refining and fine-tuning the songs and their arrangements, of working them harder, cleaning them up. This is not totally true for two of the ending tracks, which take off with more realized structures, making it easier to "hear" the songs. They should have been sequenced first. "Slowly Burning Ashes" has a nice, fuzzy build-up and fast, trebly, ringing guitar. "Eighteen Questions," though noisy, has a pretty melody and attention-grabbing changes. The band does sound like they'd be fun and loud live. Fans of emo-influenced music may enjoy *Friends Are Ghosts*. (JS)

My Pal God Records, 47 Hardy Dr., Princeton, NJ 08540, [www.mypalgodrecords.com](http://www.mypalgodrecords.com)

**9 Ted Leo/Pharmacists – Hearts Of Oak, CD**

I just finished writing 1,500 words about this album for the local alt-weekly here in Chicago. Now I've got only 200 to say something similar. To be honest, I could have written both reviews in just four words—*this album fucking rules*—but I think Ted deserves more than that. This album is like 13 little revelations packed into 5 inches of plastic and metal. Ted takes the rubble of the World Trade Center and everything that has followed—Afghanistan, Bush's assault on civil rights, Iraq—and manages to create something truly hopeful from it all. Leo has filled *Hearts Of Oak* with luscious poems filled to the very rim with both sadness for the times we live in and hope that we can rise above them and build better lives. When Colin Powell addressed the UN back in February, this was the album I reached for when he was done; it made me feel less alone and less afraid. With his scholarly ear and romantic's brain—not to mention his dedication to the perfect power-pop hook—Leo has managed to craft songs that provide respite from the horror around you and fill you up for the fight that lies ahead. Leo says it best: "Everything's calm in the half-light of dawn/ but the morning will bring no peace/ 'cause you'll never be done with the work you've begun/ even in moments of relief." (DS)

Lookout Records, 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703, [www.lookoutrecords.com](http://www.lookoutrecords.com)

**Ten Years From Now – S/T, CD**

To say that this is a good NOFX sound-a-like band would be true, but not the entire truth. This band does have some originality of its own to offer—but NOFX should get royalties from bands like these. Good, tight-sounding melodic punk stuff. (BC)

Self-released, [www.tenyearsfromnow.net](http://www.tenyearsfromnow.net)

**Tex La Homa – Dazzle Me With Transience, CD**

As soft and gentle as a fabric softener advertising campaign. Tex La Homa is a one-man band of sorts; all music was written and performed by Matt Shaw. Slow indie rock over slow to midtempo drum-machine beats. Belle And Sebastian meets David Gray recorded on a four-track. (TK)

Superglider Records, Suite 5, Pine Court, 36 Gervis Rd, Bournemouth BH1 3DH, UK,

[www.superglider.com](http://www.superglider.com)

**Three Day Threshold – Behind The Bar, CD**

Like the first track on *Behind The Bar* says, Three Day Threshold is a little bit country and a little bit rock 'n' roll. Catchy, bluegrass-twinged straight-up rock songs, like a nonironic White Stripes with harmonica and a few punky drum beats, too. (JG)

Pigpile Records, 28 Rugg Road, Allston, MA 02134,

[www.pigpilerecords.com](http://www.pigpilerecords.com)

**Tijuana Hercules – When The Moon Comes Up Wild, CD**

Chicago's Tijuana Hercules play bluesy-sounding rock 'n' roll that, at times, reminds me of the Stray Cats or some other rockabilly band. I'll bet there is a band just like this playing at a greasy bar in your hometown right now. Not really my thing. (KM)

Black Pisces Recordings, 4935 N. Mozart, Apt. 1, Chicago, IL 60625

**Too Many Crooks – Spanish Fly, CD**

I hear the fourth wave of ska is upon us, so maybe my enjoyment of this record was mental preparation. Major props are given to the second wave two-tone era, as well as to ska-pop acts like Madness, while maintaining a fresh and original catchiness that is hard to repel. (MG)

Do the Dog Music, 26a Craven Rd, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 5NE, England

**Trench Coat Yuppies – This Is Next, CD**

Self-described as a band created by Trench after 9/11, they play songs about despair, suicide, and the general negative side of life. Musically very similar to many mid-'80s hardcore. If you twisted my arm, I'd admit they remind me of Tesco Vee and the Meatmen at times. (EA)

Self-released, [www.trenchcoatyuppies.com](http://www.trenchcoatyuppies.com)

**Reviewer Spotlight: Neal Shah (NS)**

SNFU, *Better Than A Stick In The Eye*. I'm sure most people would recommend one of the first two SNFU albums, but those people are nerds, and nerds get their pants pulled down. Besides, *Better Than A Stick In The Eye* is the first album I heard by them, so it holds a special place in my heart. This album might be a tad more metal than the previous two, but only a tad. And I happen to like that tad, but not the Tad from Seattle. I digress. Remember when you could actually identify punk/hardcore singers? Well you can't confuse Cffi Pig's distinct vocals or insane lyrics for anyone else. On this album, he chose (or was possessed) to sing about futons, mailmen bent on killing dogs, and G.I. Joe dolls coming to life. Of course there were also more serious topics covered, but I think I always enjoyed SNFU for their oddness, especially back when punk was too serious and political. Seems weird to hear that, eh? But besides the unique lyrics, this album is filled with fast, rockin' music and plenty of nice little guitar solos. This is probably one of the last great, authentic skate-rock albums, besides Gang Green's later releases. They finish the album out with a cover of Cat Stevens "Wild World," a perfect ending for a perfect album.

**Twisted Steel, Leather Donut:** The Cure, Token Entry, AOD, new Snuff, Threebrain, MIA, Sense Field.

**True Love Always – Clouds, CD**

True Love Always plays extremely pleasant pop music: lounge guitars, bouncy bass lines and jazzy beats accompanied by cheerful male/female vocals. My old roommate, Ben, would probably get stoned and draw to this. Very talented and hard to resist, no matter what your sweet-tooth tolerance may be. (NS) Teenbeat, PO Box 3265, Arlington, VA 22203, [www.teenbeat.net](http://www.teenbeat.net)

**Tunnel Of Love – Rock 'n' Roll Bitches, CD**

I think The White Stripes started out the same way: shitty vocals sung through a blown-out speaker, shitty punk/blues guitar also played through a blown out speaker, and domestically abused drums. These two guys have a gimmick and wear tights, shorts and boots. They'll be huge in a few years. (DM)

Mister Records, 199 South St., #5, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130, [www.misterrecords.com](http://www.misterrecords.com)

**283 – S/T, CD**

283 has that hard, methodical, quiet-to-loud thing that's all the rage in DC, except they're from Canada. This release, their second full-length, has a few standout moments ("Frontline") and gets a lot more interesting after the sixth song. (JG)

Self-released, 61 Lombardi Lane, Fredericton, NB, Canada, E3A 1N8

**Two Steps To Infinity – For He Who Suffers, CD**

Can you imagine if Sarah from Velocity Girl fronted StainD? Neither can I, but this is what it would sound like. Make your own conclusions from that. There's too much "crunch" (I think they used to call it "grunge"), and the vocals fall a little flat. (VC)

Self-released, PO Box 230070, Boston, MA 02123-0070, [www.twostepstoinfinity.com](http://www.twostepstoinfinity.com)

**9 Ultimate Warriors / Kung Fu Rick – split, 7"**

Another fine release from Virginia's Robotic Empire Records brings the mosh. The Ultimate Warriors bring us nine songs of ultraviolent grind with insane screaming and death-metal growls. The end of the Warrior side also features a funny sample that encourages the listener to call and threaten the people who work at 1-800-COLLECT. The Kung Fu Rick side keeps the mosh going with an excellent thrash song that has a ton of interesting tempo changes. This is a

really great release that definitely left me wanting more from each band. If you're a fan of either of the bands or the styles, this is worth seeking out. (KM)

Robotic Empire, PO Box 4211 Richmond, VA 23220, [www.roboticempire.com](http://www.roboticempire.com)

**Until The End – Let The World Burn, CD**

More militant sXe hardcore for the underagers. Complete with a slow tempo mosh metal part in every song for all the kids to pick up their change or whatever they do during that brainless, droning crapulence. (TK)

Eulogy Records, PO Box 8692, Coral Springs, FL 33075, [www.eulogyrecordings.com](http://www.eulogyrecordings.com)

**Up Up Down Down Left Right Left Right B A Start—And Nothing Is #1, CD**

OK, enough of the Nintendo inside joke that is this band's name. The Ataris have a song with the same name, and Urban Outfitters even carries T-shirts. This is Pedro The Lion-ish emo-sounding stuff; the rockin' songs recall early Promise Ring & Jimmy Eat World. Good but not unique. (KR)

World Won't Listen..., PO Box 1681, Auburn, AL 36831, [www.worldwontlisten.com](http://www.worldwontlisten.com)

**Via Tania – Under A Different Sky, CD**

Post-rock meets trip-hop as Tania May-Bowers' smooth, velvety vocals float over gentle, dreamy beats. This atmospheric music is slinky, sultry, and yes, sexy. Lots of bass and murmured sweet nothings make this a headphones-required album. (AT) Chocolate Industries, [www.chocolateindustries.com](http://www.chocolateindustries.com)

**Violents, The – Rebecca's Morning Voice**

It's a flashback to the early '90s when girls were grrrls from this Champaign-Urbana trio of women. The Violents are lo-fi reminiscence of Sleater-Kinney and Bratmobile, except with snottier vocals. Also included is a pretty rad Bran Van 3000 shout-out. (AA)

Mud Records, 303 West Griggs St., Urbana, IL 61801, [www.parasol.com](http://www.parasol.com)

**9 Washington Generals – G28, CD**

Having been recorded in just two days, this record makes studio production look like it were a musical handicap. The Generals have a bit of the revival sound à la The White Strokes, except WG are more fun and free of any pre-

tense. There's also some Pavement seeped into their music, except without the weird tuning and Malkmus' nonsensical lyrics. Keith Maitland's singing and witty lyricism are reminiscent of They Might Be Giants and Stan Ridgeway. But don't take these band comparisons to heart, because WG have a sound all their own. It's the echo of their soothingly crunchy guitars and stripped-down beats. There's a charismatic air that pours out of your speakers when you're listening to them. The simplicity of the bare minimum makes this simply the best CD in my batch of reviewer shmutz this time around. (AA)

Lo-Bango Records, [www.lo-bango.com](http://www.lo-bango.com)

**We vs. Death – S/T, CDR**

Instrumental rock that successfully utilizes trumpet and strings to carry melodies. This tends to lean a bit toward the emo side of things and stays at midtempo throughout. What impressed me most was the screen-printed envelope this came in, rather ambitious for a CDR. (PS)

Self-released, [www.wevsdeath.tk](http://www.wevsdeath.tk)

**Western Sky – S/T, CDEP**

This is the most artfully emo CD packaging I've ever come across. The music matches: artful, screamy emo-core with a dab of socio-political commentary, talk of the dance revolution, and, to close things off, one fast and heavy song disguised as a gentle and sprawling instrumental. (MG)

Self-released, [www.westernskydancefloor.com](http://www.westernskydancefloor.com)

**Wick Effect, The – Quit, CD**

Noisy, loud, furious, noisy, rock 'n' roll. Three guys with lots of influences that get all crazed and blended into one interesting CD. (BC)

Captive Ring Records, 172 East Fourth St., 6-F, New York, NY 10009, [www.captivering.com](http://www.captivering.com)

**Wilson, Gary – Forgotten Lovers, CD**

This artsy jazz/new wave/pop/electronic/lounge hybrid is best described as Beck, Koufax and the Briefs rolled into one funky whole. Irresistible as much as it is irreverent, *Forgotten Lovers*, a collection of previously unreleased material, merits the national attention Wilson's debut LP garnered—25 years after its original release. (BN)

Motel Records, 210 East 49th St., New York, NY 10017, [www.motelrecords.com](http://www.motelrecords.com)

**Reviewer Spotlight: Andy Slob (AS)**

Butthole Surfers, *Brown Reason To Live*. "I am the ultimate god!" followed by the sounds of a man nearly breaking down into tears—it's one of the most emotional and honest moments in rock history. Oddly enough, it's end of a song called "The Shah Sleeps In Lee Harvey's Grave" off of the superb Butthole Surfers debut EP, *Brown Reason To Live*. It's that accidental shift from extreme bravado to mournful regret that most bands only dream of pulling off, and it's all courtesy of some of America's most drug-addled pranksters. The following six tracks put experimental punk on the map. No one was quite sure what to make of it. Was it psychedelia, was it punk rock, or was it just crap? But everyone was certain that it was nothing like anything else. Insane, but not cheesy, lyrics that sounded intensely passionate while the music sometimes grooved, rocked, irritated or just became noise. The Surfers later expanded into DIY, kitchen-based, recording techniques and zapped any emotion from their vocals with effects processors, but this sounds brilliant. Drums that pound and words have the clarity required to catch such oddball lines as "I got a stiff upper lip because I'm half dead" and "they shot the pope's ass...and I feel good!". Kids, everyone, this is required listening. This is their peak, before they became druggies, major-label casualties, and ultimately the biggest assholes in independent-rock history. Condolences to the much more respectable Touch & Go Records.

**Reasons to put off suicide:** The Residents, *Ich Flix*, DVD; the *Let's Get Killed* comp; and the *Swarm of Angels 7"*.



### Woolworthy - Recycler, CD

Shit, I lived in Chicago for years and never checked this band out. Damn, am I dumb! Well, here you have 23 tunes recorded from 1996-2002 that showcase this fine band's talent of writing power-pop songs. Cheap Trick and Urge Overkill would be proud. (BC)  
Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy Beds, SG 19 2WB, UK, [www.bosstuneage.com](http://www.bosstuneage.com)

### Worthless United - I Am Nothing, CDEP

Four-song EP with two songs from different full-lengths and two tracks exclusive to this disc. They sound like they are friends of the Bouncing Souls, which I assume they are, with this being co-released by Chunksah Records. Straight-up punk rock with some pop sensibilities. (EA)  
Now or Never Records, 150 Bay St., Suite 806, Jersey City, NJ 07302, [www.noworneverrecords.com](http://www.noworneverrecords.com)

### X The Owl - S/T, CDEP

This EP carries itself darn well with its fast guitars and Ted Kilcommon's sweetly adolescent voice. In fact, after a couple of listens, and you'll swear X The Owl is a new take on Modest Mouse, only smarter. Favorites include the charming "Saturday Song," and the wonderfully whiny "Intentions." (SP)  
Self-released, [www.xtheowl.net](http://www.xtheowl.net)

### Ξ Xenakis, Iannis - Persepolis + Remixes, Edition 1, CD

Historical, big, important and piercing, this musique concrete was composed for the Shah of Iran in 1971 for a multimedia extravaganza celebrating secularism. The sound of the universe exploding, of utter chaos, inner meltdown and even carnage, it's spooky and surreal. The aural equivalent of Bergman's *Persona*, perhaps it sounds like what schizophrenia feels like. By turns dissonant, mystical and spacey, it is underpinned by physics. (Xenakis was an engineer and architect.) Oddly, it's all beautiful and moving. A second disc adds to the hugeness with remixes by international avant-garde composers, including Japan's Merzbow, Ryoji Ikeda, Otomo Yoshihide and Construction Kit; Spain's Francisco Lopez; Poland's Zbigniew Karkowski; Germany's Ulf Langheinrich; and the U.S.'s Antimatter and Laminar. Wow. (JS)  
Asphodel, 763 Brannan St., San Francisco, CA 94103, [www.asphodel.com](http://www.asphodel.com)

### Reviewer Spotlight: Jill Steinberger (JS)

Simon & Garfunkel, *Wednesday Morning 3:00 A.M.* One day recently I was critically ill. With all my might, I took shaky steps toward the CD cabinet and pulled out S&G's 1964 folk treasure, *Wednesday Morning 3:00 A.M.*, bought secondhand at an old-style punk-rock record store in San Francisco. Not only was it the first "rock" album I'd ever heard (along with *Abbey Road* and *Rubber Soul*), but my mom had played it when she was a youth and I her baby. I knew every word by heart, and the redemptive, sustaining songs nursed me through the day. My mom couldn't bring me red Jell-O, chicken noodle soup, 7-Up or Barbies, but I could take the music with me anywhere, anytime. It's uncanny how relevant the strummy songs remain: Mere days before I took ill, I'd marched with 500,000 San Franciscans opposing war with Iraq; *Wednesday's* songs protested war and inhumanity and seemed to shout, "These aren't somebody else's problems. They're ours!" The essence of poignant, "He Was My Brother" was written for childhood friend Andrew Goodman, who died at 23 in 1964 in a Mississippi civil-rights demonstration. In "The Sun Is Burning," later referenced in Love's song "Mushroom Clouds," the splendor of nature is juxtaposed with a realistic image of nuclear terror. "Blecker Street," a paean to New York's East Village, is a gentle complement to Lou Reed's "Walk On The Wild Side," both prescient of Manhattan's recent chaos and tragedy. Lying prone, the urgency of the personal and political cohered, and I understood in a fresh way how music soothes, softens, calms, heals—and rouses the people.

**What's on my carousel?** Cat Power, *You Are Free*; Howe Gelb, *The Listener*; The Clean, *Anthology*; Merge Records, *Survive And Advance*; Mus, *El Naval*; Richard Buckner, *Devotion + Doubt*.

### Ξ Yeah Yeah Yeahs - Machine, CDEP

If you don't know about the Yeah Yeah Yeahs yet from the whole indie-rock media frenzy surrounding them, check out this three-song EP and groove to the in-your-face, danceable garage tunes. Unusually loud for just a drummer and one guitarist, the rock is supplemented by the condescending, yet mesmerizing, voice of art-damaged spastic singer Karen O. You'll get one brand new track (the oddly sexual "Machine"), a bluesy garage-punk demo song, and a remix of "Pin" (off their first EP). The Yeah Yeah Yeahs really don't sound like anything I've ever heard before, and even if they end up being the hip flavor-of-the-month band, it's worthwhile to give them a try. See band live for ultimate effect. (MG)  
Touch And Go Records, PO Box 25520, Chicago, IL 60625

### Young And The Useless, The - S/T, CD

Hardcore vocals vary between broken-glass shrieks or Cookie Monster growls, but this singer screams with an intensity like he's passing a massive shit. The nu-hardcore (anything Poison the Well-ish) band play standard mosh metal, but could benefit from another guitarist. Maybe they could borrow one from Pg.99... (VC)  
Thorpe Records, PO Box 6786, Toledo, OH 43612, [www.thorprecords.com](http://www.thorprecords.com)

### Your Enemies Friends—The Wiretap EP, CDEP

Hell yeah! Dark, riff-heavy, garage punk with cool keyboards. It has a great urgency to it; the band lives somewhere between the Murder City Devils and Milemarker. The best tracks are the more energetic ones ("A Life Without A Heart"); the slower ones kind of drag (track 6). Good stuff! (KR)  
Buddyhead, PO Box 1268, Hollywood, CA 90018, [www.buddyhead.com](http://www.buddyhead.com)

### Zeehas;12 wait - To The Maxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Quasi-dancey electro nu-new-wave with a dash of noise jam sessions in the mix. On the whole, it's a fun CD except there are times where it does drag a bit with the "experimental" side. (AA)  
Self-released, [Zeehas12wait@hotmail.com](mailto:Zeehas12wait@hotmail.com)

### V/A - Anti-Folk Volume One, CD

What a nice idea: Get a bunch of punk and hardcore kids together to play some acoustic ditties. There's no Dashboard Confessional hoo-ha here,

just a good collection of soothing, pretty songs. Features members of Spirit of 86 and Beezewan, as well as Mike Park of Skankin' Pickle. (AT)  
Heel Turn Media, PO Box 291, Orpington BR6 8LW, UK, [www.heelturnmedia.com](http://www.heelturnmedia.com)

### V/A - Breaker Breaker, CD

A sampler from Breaker Breaker Records featuring 14 bands and 24 tracks of highly spirited and euphonic indie-rock and post-hardcore. The Harp Project, Destination:Daybreak and My Hotel Year provide the best on this collection of highly infectious tunes from the Sunshine State. (BN)  
Breaker Breaker Records PO Box 536071 Orlando, FL 32853-6071, [breakerbreaker@hotmail.com](mailto:breakerbreaker@hotmail.com)

### V/A - Don't Know When I'll Be Back Again, CD

This compilation reinvents classic rock as a tribute to and benefit for Vietnam veterans. The concept works, and it's interesting to hear different takes on songs that were written before a lot of us were born. Featuring musicians including Enon, Q And Not U, Atombombpocketknife, J. Robbins, Death Cab For Cutie, and the always marvy Ted Leo. (AT)  
Exotic Fever, PO Box 297, College Park, MD 20741-0297

### V/A - Go Kart Vs. The Corporate Giant, CD

For fans of Go Kart records artists, this is a no-brainer. For the rest of us, Go Kart is famous for its rock 'n' roll, chugga-chugga standards. At 30 songs, it's a good value, and it features previously unreleased tracks from Plan A Project, Two Man Advantage, Capture The Flag, I Farm, and Bantam, among others. Worth it for the holographic cover alone. (JG)  
Go Kart, PO Box 20, Prince Street Station, New York, NY 10012, [www.gokartrecords.com](http://www.gokartrecords.com)

### Ξ V/A - Just Drums, CD

"Never date an artist," my mother told me. (She married one.) So instead I set my sights on drummers. There was Jeremy, Ryan, Joe, Lee—not to mention numerous crushes. Perhaps it's because I originally wanted to be a drummer, but my parents prodded me toward the violin—but that's another story. That's why the drum dork inside me was excited to hear *Just Drums*, a compilation of 17 percussion solos. Ranging from jazz improvisation to afrobeat to the sweet sound of cowbell, the contributions showcase the wide variety and range of

percussion. These compositions are energetic, melancholy, and occasionally eerie. It's all too easy to overlook the contributions of drummers, as they're usually hidden behind the glitz of guitarists and singers. The musicians on *Just Drums* prove that percussion deserves every plaudit. (AT)

Fever Pitch, 1108 E. Capitol Drive, Appleton, WI 54911, feverpitch70@hotmail.com

#### V/A - Lesson For Today, CD

A compilation of 15 bands with 21 songs, all of which seem previously released, though maybe hard to find. It's a typical low-budget compilation with some really good bands, though: Agnostic Front, Fifteen, and Link 80 being the best known. (EA) Almost Good Music, PO Box 2233, Fond du Lac, WI 54936-2233, www.almost-good-music.com

#### V/A - Let's Get Killed, 12"

A quirky collection of obscure bands playing everything from garage rock, indie rock and just about everything in between. There really isn't anything on this record to warrant a purchase unless you're really into disjointed compilations that feature a number of genres. (BN)

Cock Punch Records 614 N. Mantua St., Kent, OH 44240

#### V/A - Lookout! Freakout 3, CD

Noteworthy tracks from this latest compilation include exuberant tunes by Ben Weasel, Smugglers, and The Pattern. Not to mention Bratmobile's kick-ass "I'm In The Band," and The Queers' cutesy, "Psycho Over You." Love, buzzing guitars, panicky voices, and clever packaging (check out the war motif)—what more could you want? (SP)

Lookout! Records / Panic Button Records, 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA, 94703, www.panicbutton-records.com

#### V/A - Mostly Midwest, CD

This above average female-dominated indie-rock compilation showcases some great new bands like Crime and Judy and The Blush, but it suffers from dreadful "radical cheerleading" chants between some of the tracks. Anyone who thinks the expression "that's so gay" is as egregious as slavery is a fucking moron. (AE)

Mostly Midwest, 3057 N. Pierce, Milwaukee, WI 53212

#### Reviewer Spotlight: Miss Annie Tomlin (AT)

The Darling Buds, *Erotica*. Oh, the sad coincidence! October 1992 saw the release of two vastly different records that had the misfortune of sharing the same title. Released within weeks of each other, both had strikingly similar cover art (fuzzy profiles of a woman in rapture) and the same name, *Erotica*. One album, a bland offering from Madonna, would cause controversy and hype due to its S&M theme. The other, the third release by a Welsh group called the Darling Buds, would receive less attention despite its superior songs. The band's dreamy, shoegazer guitar pop borrowed from Ride, Chapterhouse, and My Bloody Valentine without aping their style. Get-stuck-in-your-head songs like "Sure Thing" and "One Thing Leads To Another" (not a Kinks cover) shine with the touch of musicians who respect and understand the craft of pop songwriting. Singer Andrea Lewis' voice is, to borrow a name of one of her songs, crystal clear. The guitars neither abuse nor misuse their effect pedals, and the drumming is driving. Overshadowed by the release of Madonna's album, the Darling Buds disbanded in 1993. If you're ever lucky enough to find a copy of their *Erotica* in a used record bin, snap it up. It's bound to please.

**Off the hook:** seeing the Rolling Stones live; Ted Leo; Saturday Looks Good To Me.

#### ♫ V/A - Nothing Left To Lose: A Tribute To Kris Kristofferson, CD

*Nothing Left To Lose* is a warm and soulful tribute that illustrates that this Nashville-based singer/songwriter's career deserves a closer look. Besides his own recordings, Kristofferson wrote more than 100 songs that have been recorded by more than 500 different artists (such as hits like "Me And Bobby McGee" and "Help Me Make It Through the Night"), including Johnny Cash. The "outsider" bands covering Kristofferson are at their best here, and the compilation is consistent across its 17 songs. Highlights include interpretations of Kristofferson's songs by artists and bands like Calexico, Howe Gelb, Radar Bros., Richard Buckner, Granfaloon Bus, Souled American, the Handsome Family, Grandaddy, Virgil Shaw, Creeper Lagoon, The Court And Spark, Zmrzlina, and Rebecca Gates with Califone. You've got nothing to lose and everything to win by getting a hold of this sweet comp. It's a great listen. (JS)

Incidental Music, 3440 25th St., #504, San Francisco, CA 94110

#### ♫ V/A - Pulse From Mid-America, CD

I guess Indiana has more to offer than Axl Rose, Jeff Kendall and, uh, car racing. I kid Indiana. We used to hang out. But anyways, this compilation of Indiana bands shows some real talent. Most of the bands are on the poppy side, but there a couple scorchers mixed in. My favorites are Mike Dixon (Sebadoh-esque), The Coke Dares (chaotic, catchy pop), Sex Tiger (fuzzy, swaggering rock 'n' roll), The Romance Morgue (AmRep/screamo type stuff) and Racebannon (epic, arty hardcore). But most of the other bands are pretty promising as well. Nice job, Indiana. Call me. (NS)

Anatomy, 225 E. North St., #1900, Indianapolis, IN 46204, www.anatomyrecords.com

#### V/A - Narnack Records Sampler, CD

The two new Guitar Wolf songs are the high points of this fun garage-rock label sampler. Also features other Narnack bands like Coachwhips, Nice Nice, and Langhorne Slim. (AE)

Narnack Records, 381 Broadway, 4th Floor, Suite 3, New York, NY, 10013, www.narnackrecords.com

#### V/A - Stepping Stone Vol. 1: The Best Bands You Have Never Heard, CD

There's a smattering of outstanding tracks on this emo/pop-punk compilation. Tracks from Tokyo Rose, Copeland, Nothing To Lose, Acceptance, Mico and The Cassettes remind you that songs about relationships and heartbreaks often are so much better to listen to when sung over catchy hooks, swirly guitars and upbeat rhythms. (JD)

The Militia Group, 7925 Warner Ave., Suite K, Huntington Beach, CA 92647, www.themilitia-group.com

#### V/A - Summer Solution, CD

This compilation features diverse bands from around the country. Even though it switches from wispy sweetness to angry hardcore to Colombian electronic blips, it's ultimately noncompelling. Of 26 songs, many had promise (especially the Switch), but I felt like I was listening to these bands' rough drafts, instead of finished products. (AT)

Reason Y, PO Box 145171, Coral Gables, FL 33114, www.reasony.com

#### V/A - Two Turds And A Golf Ball, CD

Twenty-five bands each contribute their musical (and I use that term loosely) take on the title theme. Sparkling contributors include Big Poo Generator, Buttfinger, The Poops, Poopy, and Colon On The Cob. This is as crappy, asinine, juvenile, and pointless as you'd expect. (AT)

Hollow Bunny, PO Box 33264, Raleigh, NC 27636, www.hollowbunny.com

#### V/A - We're Twins Records 2003 Sampler, CD

This small but prolific label, based out of Ann Arbor, Mich., and Brooklyn, puts out the best in bedroom pop and experimental four-track releases. This compendium of songs from more than two dozen of their artists runs the gamut from melodic and catchy to just plain unlistenable. A must for fans of Elephant 6 and Shrimper stuff. (JG)

We're Twins Records, PO Box 427, Greenpoint Station, Brooklyn, NY 11222-0427, www.weretwins.com

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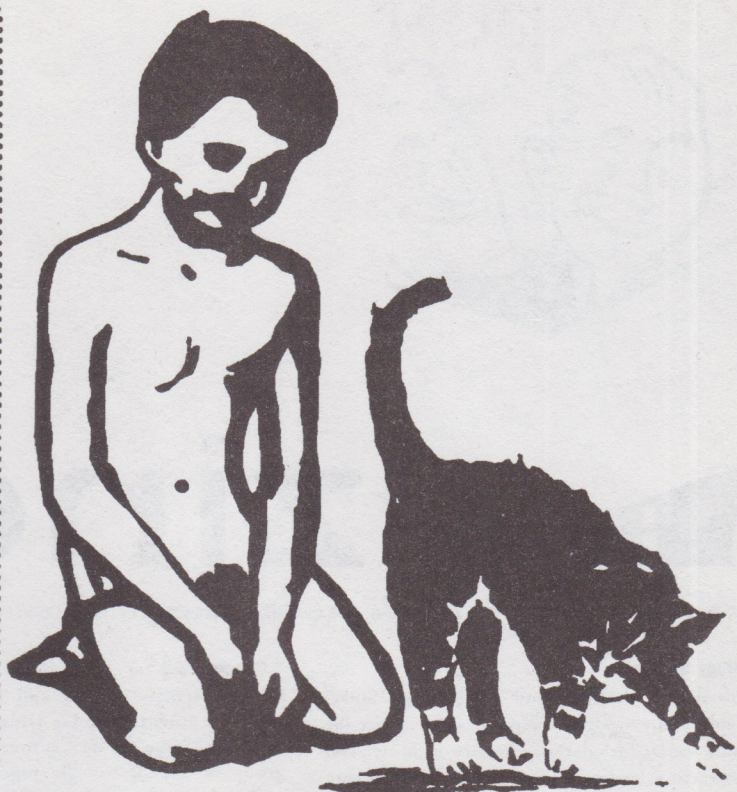
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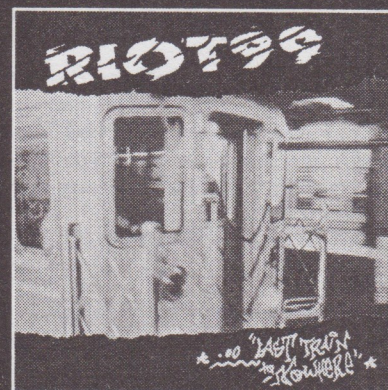
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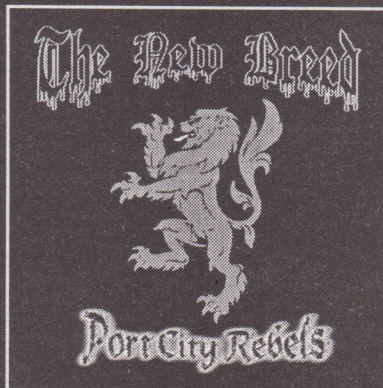
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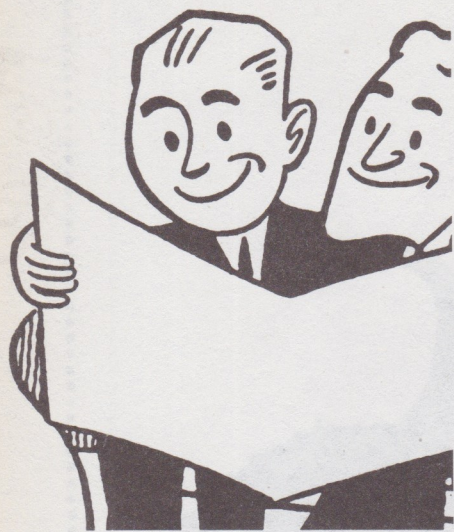
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# zines

THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: Reviewers: Amy Adoyzie (AA), Joe Biel (JB), Vincent Chung (VC), Jen Dolan (JD), Dan Laidman (DAL), Patrick Sayers (PS), Claire Sewell (CS)

## Belligerence #1

"For queers who love punk and getting drunk." Seems pretty straightforward to me. Covers the Philly scene, includes an interview with Myles of Destruction, reviews and stories. Even comes with mini Belligerence stickers! (AA)  
\$2, broodingRant Press, 72 Sarah Ln., Middletown, NY 10941

## Bleed #2

A series of letters to friends and family that were never sent. These letters do little more than briefly outline an argument or question she's had, leaving the reader with little to go on. More detailed accounts may help to answer her own questions, as well as ours. (PS)  
\$1 or trade, PO Box 4316, Philadelphia PA 19118

## Build Up #1

A first in a series of projects from Raleigh, NC's Legget Press. This installment is a one-page fold-out of poems by Jon Leon. Poetry about Angst! Despair! Girls on bikes! Tight on craft, but the topics and form lack sustainable originality. (VC)  
\$1, Legget Press, PO Box 12091, Raleigh, NC 27605-2091

## Burnt #5

New Jersey-based zine with both personal and political writings by a group of contributors. The feature piece of this issue is the "pro-pornography feminist" essay and an interview with documentary filmmaker Becky Goldberg, whose latest work is entitled *Hot & Bothered: Feminist Pornography*. Good read, all in all. (AA)  
\$1 or three stamps, Franco Ortega, PO Box 5754, Parsippany, NJ 07054, [www.burntzine.i85.net](http://www.burntzine.i85.net)

## \* Caboose #3

An endearingly hammy and idiosyncratically witty solo pursuit from Liz Saidel, half of *Cul-de-Sac* fame. Issue #3 is a conversation among a group of friends brought together by karaoke nights at the now-defunct Chicago venue, The Lounge Ax. A stable group of creative regulars and costume changes by host Fred Armisen made for a monthly event not to be missed. In these conversations, the five dissect the karaoke experience, preach etiquette, and—most importantly—relive some memories that brought them together. The conversation is upbeat, with everyone expounding philosophically on choreography, song selection, and those hilariously corny videos that distract one from following the bouncing lyric ball. Think of this as a pocket karaoke resource—because you're bound to need one if you know what's good for you. *Caboose* continues to charm its way into reader's hearts with adoring wit, and I look forward to more. "Once when I was doing a power ballad that fades out and then rearrives full force, during the drumroll back in, the KJ said to me, 'Sell it!' I knew exactly what he meant. Rest assured. I would sell. I knew how to sell." (VC)  
\$2, Liz Saidel, PO Box 476802, Chicago, IL 60647, [www.aamla.org/loopdistro](http://www.aamla.org/loopdistro) (Loop Distribution)

## The CIA Makes Science Fiction Unexciting #1

This well-illustrated zine aims to expose government involvement in MLK's assassination. Stylistically, this zine fails at giving its content the sophistication and flair it deserves. As the zine tries to be objective, its credibility wanes when its sensationalistic tone holds readers in contempt. (VC)  
\$1 and stamp, Microcosm Publishing, PO Box 14332, Portland, OR 97293-0332, [www.microcosmpublishing.com](http://www.microcosmpublishing.com)

## Deadbeat #5

Fashioned like a classic punk primer, Mike has compiled the basics of all you need to know about the Dead Kennedys and the MC5 in a spot-on, easy-to-read style. There is also info on Teengenerate and an interview with Florida band Death Becomes You. Definitely a fun read. (CS)  
60¢ stamp or trade, c/o Mike Sokoloff, POB 460106, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33346-0106, [deadbeatmagazine@yahoo.com](mailto:deadbeatmagazine@yahoo.com)

## Do The Dog Skazine #26

Indisputably the "bible of the global ska scene," *Do The Dog* is a comprehensive listing of new releases and show information. It has a distinct focus on U.K. and European happenings, but does include the occasional U.S. ska shout-out. It's a dry but informative read if ska is your thing. (JD)  
\$10/four-issue subscription, 26A Craven Road, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 5NE, United Kingdom

## \* (em) #15

This issue of the beautifully designed, Portland-based zine pays homage to our two-wheeled friend, the bicycle. A nice compilation of contributors include the ever-positive Scott Spitz (from the excellent bike-centric *Leapfrog*), Brian Alft (from *HeartattaCk* and *Contrascience*), and an informative clothing piece by Kristin Campbell and Seng Chen. Band interviews include an inspirational talk with The November Group and an amazing conversation with Bicycle, a major-label band that tours by bike. Other interviews include those with custom builder Vanilla Bicycles and the non-profit Bicycle Transportation Alliance. Personally enthusiastic, the content emits such jovial emotion that one can't help but *loooooo* the bicycle upon reaching



the end. The reviews cover records and Northwest skateparks, but are mere filler to this celebration of pedaling. (VC)

\$2, PO Box 14728, Portland, OR 97293-0728

#### \* **Fanorama #25**

*Fanorama* is a truly ambitious zine that documents the lifestyles of the queer and incarcerated. This issue features artwork, poems and columns from some prisoners as well as some outside the prison cell. Many of the articles shed light on some of prison's harsh realities; however, these often disturbing accounts don't set the tone for the zine. *Fanorama* focuses more on the sensitive sides of those involved. It's not uncommon for the boys to take a break from their rants to relive an encounter with their lover or to bypass their life as a prisoner entirely and talk about experimenting with boys for the first time. Also included in this issue is a film review for *L.I.E.*, an interview with Neil from *Wiener Society* and *Obscene Emission* zines and a guide to other queer- and prisoner-friendly zines. The cover price is a bit steep, but it helps to keep the publication free for prisoners. (PS)

\$6, 109 Arnold Avenue, Cranston RI 02905, fanorama@aol.com

#### \* **Glass Houses #2**

Receiving this zine has made my day! I reviewed *Glass Houses* #1 when it was handed to me at the Independent Publishing Conference last year, and I loved every page. In return for reviewing it, I was allowed to ride Arriel's cool-ass bicycle. I actually don't think that was the agreement, but it

worked out well anyway. This short 14-page quarter-size zine is full of entertaining personal stories (both fiction and nonfiction) and hand-drawn art, all well worth the dollar. Arriel is a very talented writer and artist, and I look forward to #3. (TK)

\$1, Arriel, 19 Grove St., #3, Arlington, MA 02476, little\_sister\_shotgun@yahoo.com

#### \* **Heckler #59**

*Heckler* is not the smartass skate-culture magazine I expected it to be. Instead, I get an informed issue that features skateboarding as well as female snowboarding hero Barrett Christy. The nonsports coverage ain't too shabby, either. An interesting interview with Blake from *Jets To Brazil*, a zine shopping spree at *Quimby's* and about the best damn article on Grandmaster Flash I've ever read. As if the content weren't enough, the folks at *Heckler* are doing their part to alienate the competition with an artistic layout that includes drawing and painting alongside great photography. This made me long for the days when I still cared about skateboarding, though now that there's something of substance to go along with it, maybe I'll take another stab at skating. (PS)

\$3.99, 1915 21st St., Sacramento, CA 95814, www.heckler.com

#### **Hand Colored #1**

Journals are used to explore inhibitions or soapbox convictions. Some document mundane activities of an occasionally eventful life. This falls in the latter,

presenting wide-eyed observations of the author watching *Bright Eyes*. Sentimental and boring, it's saved by a creative aesthetic that I haven't seen since *Indian Summer* seven inches. (VC)

No price given, 251 N. Main #5497, Cedarville, OH 45314, www.handcolored.net

#### **Killing Cupid preview issue**

The protagonist in this well-illustrated comic is haunted by Cupid—not the winged archer of love, but a tattooed chain smoker in a diaper, freshly dumped by his lover. The story and unique sequences, taking cues from *Sin City*'s more indulgent spreads, promise to make it a well-thought-out mythological twist. (VC)

No price given, 821 29th Ave. SE, #1, Portland, OR 97214, www.killingcupid.net

#### **Killing Fields, The #1**

Endearing first attempt at zine production. Unfortunately, it mirrors many of our own debuts: predictable rants, mediocre content and shallow thoughts/essays. But there's always the second attempt. (AA)

\$2 or \$1 and stamps. The Killing Fields, c/o Dominick Dufner, 2424 Hwy Z, Hermann, MO 65041, punkferret138@yahoo.com

#### **Natural Disasters**

*Natural Disasters* is an offshoot project that allows Al Burian (*Burn Collector*) to keep in touch with his inner Kinko's copy slave. He spins what could be the most mundane stories (dreams about running

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We make every attempt to review all the zines (or magazines) we receive, as long as they are released independently. However, despite our best efforts, not every zine ends up in here for a myriad of reasons. Records marked with a little eye (👁) are designated as "highlight" reviews by the reviewer. That means it's a zine that really stands out for them this time around, but just because a review doesn't have an eye doesn't mean it isn't good. Finally, if a reviewer doesn't like your zine, it's just one person's opinion, so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project and that alone is worth some congratulations!



into high school sweethearts, for instance) into hilarious, engaging and wonderfully written anecdotes. Highly recommended. (JD)  
\$1, PO Box 220386, Chicago, IL 60622

#### 941 #1

941 doesn't romanticize experience. After all, hindsight isn't always viewed through rose-colored glasses. Concise vignettes chronicle the events leading up to a runaway attempt to Boston to join a punk band. Through the author's travails, he learns a crucial lesson early on: You can't fake who you truly are. Recommended. (JD)  
\$1, 6707 Heritage Lane, Bradenton, FL 94209

#### Obscene Emission #1

Neil of *Wiener Society* presents a new zine devoted to his love of underground hardcore, grindcore and thrash. He rants and talks about the many bands he loves. I like his personal writing better, but it's great to see more of his music-lovin' freak side as well. (CS)  
\$1, Neil Wiener, c/o RAGG, PMB 278, 6523 California Ave. SW, Seattle, WA 98136-1833

#### Ovary Action #4

With some financial support from a local record shop, these Norwegian grrrls publish *Ovary Action* to spread information about girl-positive music and zines. Features interviews with Amy Schroeder from Chicago's *Venus* zine and Icelandic techno-minimalist wunderkinds Múm, reviews as well as an obvious obsession with Kat Bjelland (ex-Babes in Toyland). (JD)  
Free, c/o Val Rauzier, Holbergs Gate 3A, 0166, Oslo, Norway

#### Paul The Punker #4

A poorly illustrated comic features a bi-hawked squatter with suspenders dealing with an intruder in his less than humble abode. I can't tell if it's supposed to be funny, an exposé on squatter punks, or a profound statement linking punks with midget hookers. (VC)  
No price given, PO Box 1299, Boston, MA 02130, [www.geocities.com/spatt77](http://www.geocities.com/spatt77)

#### Pick Your Poison #3

Rubble. Gorilla. Benevolence. Scene. Attempting to spark memories and to generate story ideas for #3, *PYP* scans the dictionary for literary inspiration. What could have been a hodgepodge of unrelated messes turns into a zine whose pieces are united by the themes of drunkenness, crazy youth antics, disaffection and nostalgia. (JD)  
\$2, PO Box 8995, Minneapolis, MN 55408

#### Riot77 #5

Includes long interviews with Foreign Legion, Bad Religion and members of the Dead Kennedys. There's great variety here, and the effort to put it all together really shines through. It's much easier to read than last issue, with equally great visuals. An all-around great zine. (CS)  
\$2.50, 31 St. Patrick's Park, Clondalkin, Dublin 22,

Ireland, [riot77magazine@hotmail.com](mailto:riot77magazine@hotmail.com)

#### Roctober #34

Instead of its usual content of comics and features, this issue is devoted entirely to one-man bands. This edition has been dubbed the "One Man Band Encyclopedia," where more than a thousand one-man bands are listed with mini-bios in alphabetical order! (AA)  
\$4, 1507 E. 53rd St., #617, Chicago, IL 60615, [www.roctober.com](http://www.roctober.com)

#### Shuck Comics #1

*Shuck* is one beautifully fucked up comic. Its creators were nominated for the 2002 Ignatz Award for Promising New Talent—rightfully so. Not only does *Shuck* not look like any comic I've read, the characters "speak" in a language unlike any I've ever heard. I can't recommend this strongly enough. (JD)  
\$2.95, Sulfurstar, 668 Dexter St., Denver, CO 80220, [www.sulfurstar.com](http://www.sulfurstar.com)

#### Shuck Comics #2

Otherworldly tale of one Mr. Shuck, our ram-headed soul-catcher protagonist. In this issue he is faced with returning the escaped soul of his beautiful wife to the land of purgatory. This installment is worth it just for the how-to homebrew section in the back. (AA)  
\$2.95, 668 Dexter St., Denver, CO 80220, [www.sulfurstar.com](http://www.sulfurstar.com)

#### Shuck #3

Call it dialect, an accent, or even an attempt at local color, but I could hardly follow the English (?) in this comic. Perhaps reading outloud with puppets would help. Well, I can look at the pretty pictures. It seems to be a fantasy tale about witches and a mutant baby. (VC)  
\$2.95, 668 Dexter St., Denver, CO 80220, [www.sulfurstar.com](http://www.sulfurstar.com)

#### Shuck Comics #4

I'm really not sure what to make of this. It's unique in its presentation of the characters. They speak in a weird, childish double-speak that's really hard to read at first. I also found the story confusing, but that could be because I came in on issue 4. Overall, it's definitely engaging. (CS)  
\$2.95, 668 Dexter St., Denver, CO 80220, [www.sulfurstar.com](http://www.sulfurstar.com)

#### Slingshot #76

The Bay Area's Slingshot Collective continues to impress with their well-written and diverse anarchist publication. Sombre stories covering war in Iraq to unconventional protest methods in Nigeria are tempered with an almost giddy issue introduction. Chalk up the extra excitement to their annual "Anarchist Crush Night 2003." (JD)  
Free in the Bay Area or \$2 by mail, 3124 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94705, [www.tao.ca/~slingshot](http://www.tao.ca/~slingshot)

#### Slug Mag #167

Heavy on the advertising (on occasion, even their interviews read like glorified ads), this newsprint publication talks to the founders of *Copper Press*, chats with Tim from Avail and runs requisite reviews. I'm sure the kids in Salt Lake find *Slug* indispensable, but the material held little interest with me. (JD)  
Free, 2225 S. 500 E. Ste. 206, Salt Lake City, UT 84106, [www.slugmag.com](http://www.slugmag.com)

#### Swing Set Girl #3

Want an intimate peak into the life of a romantic, painfully wistful young woman? This reads as though the editor scooped up her diary and started photocopying. It suffers from a slight case of cliché, but Sarah is a promising writer; her ideas are sure to mature with future issues. (JD)  
\$1, PO Box 5754, Parsippany, NJ 07054, [www.girl-wakesup.i85.net](http://www.girl-wakesup.i85.net)

#### 12 Feet Under #1

This full-size comic says it "has been created as a forum for independent comic artists from Long Island." That's a great idea, but unfortunately, none of the three comics is funny or original. The humor is too juvenile, but with a little more work and insight, it could be great. (CS)  
No price given, [wageslave4@hotmail.com](mailto:wageslave4@hotmail.com)

#### Venoscope #1

You have to appreciate a zine with stitched binding! This is a DIY zine about the DIY faith. Exposés on various projects and the creation of DIY trends make a fascinating dialogue in metacommunication. Whether DIY as an institution or a relevant movement, this zine covers it all. (VC)  
\$1, 1013 B Sherman St., San Jose, CA 95110, [venoscope@popmail.com](mailto:venoscope@popmail.com)

#### Women's Self-Defense Stories And Strategies of Survival

I've heard great things about this zine, and it's all well deserved. Fifty pages tell unique, first-hand accounts of triumphs over abuse. It's simultaneously arresting and inspiring to read how each of these women survived their attacks and continue working to grow stronger. (CS)  
\$3, Ariel Clemenzi, POB 2433, Champaign, IL 61825-2433, [msippilotta@yahoo.com](mailto:msippilotta@yahoo.com)

#### Wonka Vision #19

Tons of interviews with Bad Religion, Dillinger Four, Jello Biafra, Coheed & Cambria, Rye Coalition & dozens more make up the majority of this read. Also packed full of album reviews, scattered "humor" and the usual columns of kids complaining about "the scene." (PS)  
\$2.95, PO Box 63642 Philadelphia, PA 19147, [www.wonkavision.com](http://www.wonkavision.com)

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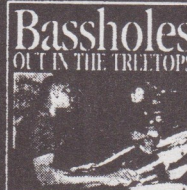
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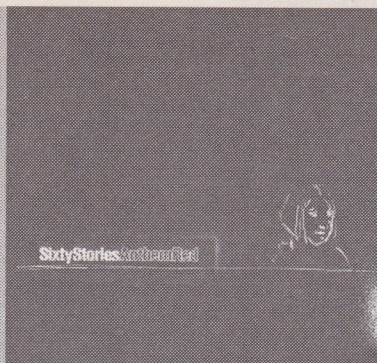
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# books

OUR BOOK REVIEWS ARE EDITED BY Joel Schalit

## Quiet Rumours: An Anarcha-Feminist Reader

Texts collected by the Dark Star collective  
AK Press/Dark Star

There's something fundamentally disturbing about an era in which previously-published texts seem more pertinent than new ones. Every day seems to bring the publication of another anthology treading a path worn smooth by worthy predecessors, a "new" reader in post-modernism, pop art, or political theory filled with the usual suspects. It's hard to muster up bad feeling towards any book that collects texts that you already know and love. So, just as fans of a band sometimes seek out a song they already have simply because it's on a motion-picture soundtrack or record-label sampler, my friends and I find ourselves buying collections replete with writings we have already acquired several times over. I must have at least 25 anthologies that include some portion of Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." They all make me happy. But few of them are truly useful.

*Quiet Rumours* is one of the exceptions—an anthology that I will surely turn to again and again even though I own most of the texts already. The writing is

consistently inspiring, particularly the pieces by Peggy Kornegger, Cathy Levine, and Joreen. But that's not enough to make the book worthwhile. Presentation is key. There are times when as subtle a difference as reading something in 18-point Verdana instead of 12-point Times Roman has made me perceive a text in a new light. The dual-column format and graceful sans-serif font of this collection works a little magic. Coupled with the judicious deployment of woodblock prints and a liberal use of white space, the layout in *Quiet Rumours* invites you to linger over texts that you otherwise might not read or might not read again.

Predictably, however, the book's appearance is the occasion for some defensive hand-wringing by the Dark Star collective. The introduction apologizes for taking the original pamphlets that comprised the *Quiet Rumours* series and making them pretty for the marketplace:

All of the pamphlets reprinted in this anthology were once readily available in your 'local friendly radical bookshop' or widely available through mail order via radical publications, and had a wide circulation. Regrettably, with the decline of radical bookshops/spaces, one-off publications 'etc, and the

increasing consolidation and money-driven commercial bookshops, these outlets are becoming fewer and fewer, and the chances of placing a book in the commercial domain are far higher than the chances of placing a pamphlet.

True enough. If you don't believe me, try to put copies of a "free" publication on the shelves of an independent bookstore.

The nicer a book looks, the more respectable its price tag, the more likely that it will be displayed where customers will see it, want it, and buy it. Verso's republication of the *Communist Manifesto* as a cute boutique micro-hardback is a case in point. Many of the people who bought this indie bestseller could have purchased a newsprint Chinese edition for a buck or two. But they opted for the dust-jacket and attractive sewn-in bookmark (in red, naturally). Is that a bad thing? It depends whether you believe in the possibility of a beauty that transcends politics. Personally, I fetishize the 1970s-era Xeroxed pamphlets from which *Quiet Rumours* and Dark Star's previous anthology *Beneath the Paving Stones* are drawn. As much as I love having them in the original, though, I'm a hell

of a lot more likely to read something that's pleasing to the eye. Purity can give you a headache.

—Charlie Bertsch

### Israel/Palestine: How to End the War of 1948

Tanya Reinhart  
Seven Stories Press

The cultural legacy of the Al-Aksa Intifada may not be worth very much to Palestinians and Israelis. With the only images of the conflict being slingshot-bearing children facing down tanks, or the mangled remains of commuter buses blown apart by suicide bombers, it would be hard to imagine that such a war would produce anything other than heartbreak and fear. Yet, curiously enough, for a nation that has historically been described as having more violinists and surgeons than plumbers and electricians, it is not entirely unthinkable that it would end up helping redefine contemporary contrarian chic: that of the Israeli dissident intellectual.

Taking its cue from the courageous reporting and biting opinion editorial writing of *Ha'aretz* newspaper writers such

as Amira Hass and Aluf Benn, read in translation on *Ha'aretz*' own English-language website and through the pages of periodicals such as *Le Monde Diplomatique* and *Salon*, leftist Israeli journalists have helped redefine what it means to be an intellectual refusenik during the War on Terrorism. Why such writers have come to embody such an identity is not difficult to understand given the remarkable lack of criticism of the war in American periodicals and television reporting. Reflecting the incredibly polarized nature of Israeli political discourse, Israeli political writing has always been extremely opinionated, if not outspoken.

What is remarkable is that it took so long for European and American publishers to pick up on this fact. Finally, after two and a half years of war, we have begun to witness what will inevitably be a deluge of translations of leftist Israeli literature by progressive American publishers. Beginning with recent publication of Roane Carey and Jonathan Shainin's collection *The Other Israel* [reviewed by Joe Lockard in PP52] and most recently, Tanya Reinhart's *Israel/Palestine: How to End the War of 1948*, English-speaking audiences are

finally getting the opportunity to hear the voices of the Israeli left, and, as alluded to in Carey and Shainin's book, learn that Israel is not so ideologically closed that it lacks its own inside critics.

A professor of linguistics at Tel Aviv University, Reinhart is not an unknown entity in Israel. Writing a bi-weekly column for Israel's largest daily, *Yediot Ahronot*, Reinhart has maintained a consistently critical position towards the so-called peace process since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1992. Her first book-length treatment of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, *Israel/Palestine* is more than just a milestone in her own career as a public intellectual. It's also an incredibly moving piece of concise and highly moralistic historiography; the first popular history of the second Intifada to be written during the current conflict. Intensely researched and beautifully argued, *Israel/Palestine* is destined to be continuously updated in much the same way as Howard Zinn's groundbreaking *A People's History of the United States*. For an excellent introduction to a growing body of progressive literature, there's no better place to start. —Joel Schalit

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: All books reviewed in Punk Planet are independently published by small or academic presses. Due to space constraints and length requirements, not all books we receive will be reviewed, as it takes quite a bit more time to read & review a book (and write the corresponding review) than it does to stick a CD in the player and write a snappy capsule. Please send all books to the reviews address listed in the front of the magazine.



## Viva Posada

Charles H Kerr Press

The world of Jose Guadalupe Posada is a world of skeletons. Female skeletons grinning garishly below fancy plumed hats; a "dandy" skeleton dolled up in tailcoat and boots; an army of skeletons revolting against a tassel-shouldered general. It is a world where death is both ever-present and irrelevant. Where mortality is the great equalizer of the classes, mocking the rich and empowering the poor.

Posada's common-man skeletons are crafty and devious; lustful and inebriated; proud and hard-working. They clean streets, forge iron, drink tequila, chase women (or men), ride bicycles and start revolutions. His wealthy skeletons are ridiculous and pompous, frivolous and greedy. Yet with a certain dignity, even in death, nonetheless.

The skeletons (*calaveras* in Spanish) are the traditional Mexican *Dia de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) symbol that Posada popularized through his work at the turn of the century. Posada is considered one of the great radical artists in Mexican history, part of the cultural and political movement that brought down corrupt president Porfirio Diaz and set the stage for the Mexican revolution.

*Viva Posada*, recently published by the independent Chicago-based Charles H Kerr press, is like the perfect trick-or-treat favor, a slim but image-packed collection of Posada's works along with quotes on the artist's significance and legacy from various local and international artists and writers ranging from Frida Kahlo and Octavio Paz to Chicago surrealists Franklin and Penelope Rosemont.

"With his vast work, Posada embodies all things that 'good taste' chooses to ignore," writes Alberto Hilar Serrano. "Thus by oppo-

sition he denounces the boundless ignorance of the bourgeois and its corresponding moral and artistic misery. In this regard, his *calaveras* are a kind of extreme democratic proposition: Death comes to everyone, it is the great equalizer, yet the fact that it affects everyone differently requires that it be represented in many and various ways."

The book is edited and introduced by Carlos Cortez, a Chicago artist and poet of national fame who continues the Posada tradition of radical art tinged with humor and human empathy. One of Cortez's well-known works is a block print of "Posada and His Catrina" Catrina being a wealthy *calavera* woman grinning coquettishly out from under a luxurious plumed hat. She is among the representations of bourgeois *calaveras* which Posada used to mock the wealthy, but she is not depicted with hatred—rather with a sense of human empathy that is more revolutionary than hatred.

Just as the wealthy *calaveras* are not shown as capitalist evil incarnate, neither are the popular masses depicted as noble savages. Rather they delight in their sensuality, lustful and drunk, embodying both the *joi de vivre* and daily grind that constitutes life for the common man. There is the *Calavera* of Madero, wearing a sombrero and *reposito* and carrying a bottle of *mezcal*, or the dancing *calaveras* "enjoying the juice from beyond the tomb;" as well as the hard-working *calavera* street cleaners and *calavera* tortilla maker.

"Posada was not gentle with his subject matter—his passion and revolutionary spirit made his images bold and poetic in a way that can't be diluted," writes Jen Besemer. While Posada is likely best known for his *calaveras*, his work ranges far beyond these characters for a huge portfolio of political and darkly humorous work. Various wood-

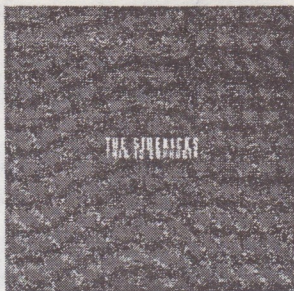
cuts show revolutionaries and workers in social realist style—street cleaners, "the dying revolutionary," "Zapata and his followers" on horseback, "The Revolutionary's Farewell" as he kisses his peasant wife for the last time. Many of the scenes are unabashedly blasphemous in their attacks on power—such as "The Clergy Attacked" in which peasants throw fruit at a stoop-shouldered clergyman in a carriage.

Other works use a style suited to political cartooning—like "The Ultimate Candidate," a mustachioed Rockefelleresque tycoon in high stiff collar and top hat or the statue of "Justice" with her head cut off. A surrealist thread runs through many of the pieces in this book, ranging from the diabolical and twisted—a woman funneling something into a dead man's ear in "the devil made her do it"—to whimsical in "The Snail," where a battle between soldiers and peasants is interrupted by a gargantuan snail passing through.

At the same time that he has enough optimism to suggest and celebrate revolution, Posada is full of black humor, chuckling and smirking at the overall doomed human condition. When it comes down to it, he seems to say, all the acts of bourgeois decadence and revolutionary bravery in the world are only like ants scurrying around on the anthill of eternity, destined to end up a pile of dust. This sentiment is expressed in a number of works depicting a comet wiping out humanity; in one the comet is a crazed-looking man hurtling toward a crowd of people under a leering sun.

"To be a master of death may not seem to be an enviable position," write Paul and Beth Garon. "But to see it exercised by Posada is to attach new meaning to the intransigence of mortality." —Kari Lydersen ©

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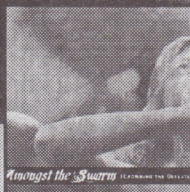
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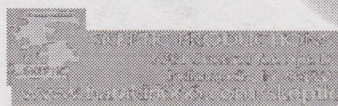
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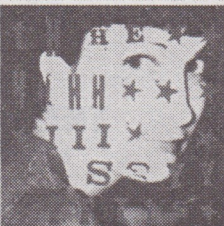
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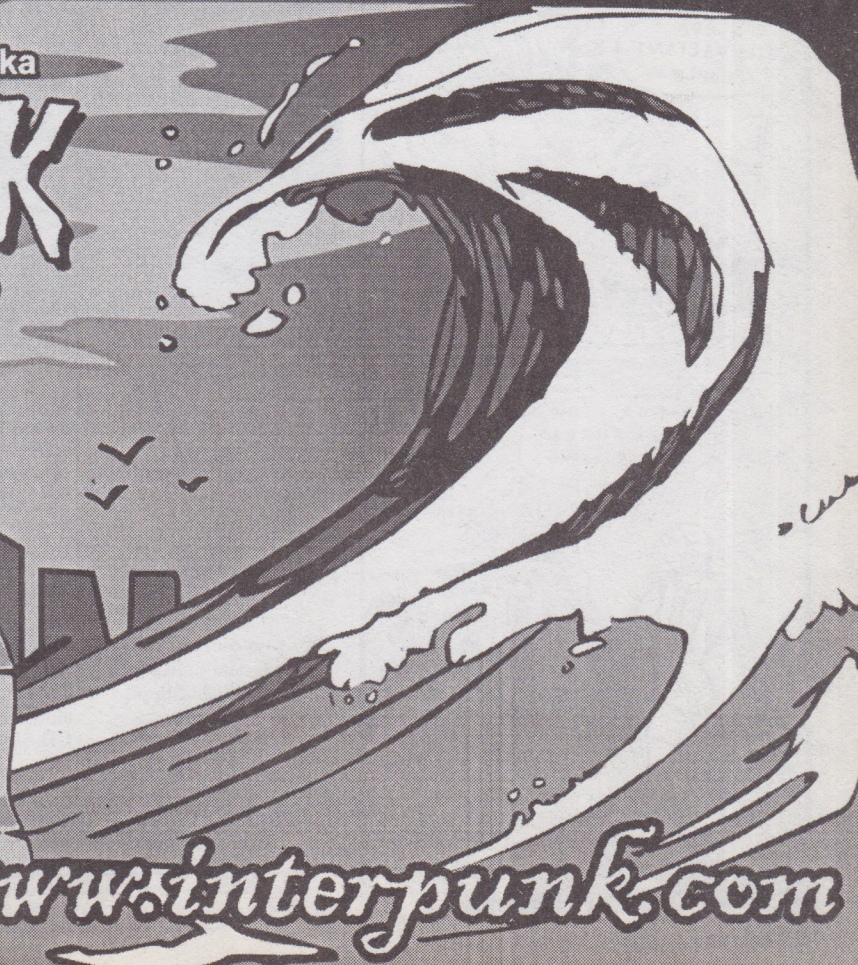
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**PP46 ART & DESIGN 2!** PP46 features **FOUR LIMITED EDITION COVERS** this time by artists **JAIME HERNANDEZ (LOVE & ROCKETS COMICS)**, **SHEPPARD FAIRY (OBEY GIANT POSTERS)**, **NIKKI MCCLURE** (Olympia, WA paper-cut artist) and **JAY RYAN** (Chicago, IL poster artist). Interviews in Art & Design 2 include Hernandez, Fairy, McClure, and Ryan along with filmmaker **SADIE SHAW**, designer **ELLIOT EARLES**, graffiti artists **JOCYLIN SUPERSTAR** and **LITTLE MISS ATTITUDE**, San Francisco's not-for-profit **POND GALLERY**, and **CRASS** collageist **GEE VAUCHER**. Articles in A&D2 include a profile of **CHICAGO'S RADICAL STREET ARTISTS THE DEPARTMENT OF SPACE AND LAND RECLAMATION**, an overview of **DIY COMICS**, a story about the **MURALS OF CHICAGO'S PILSEN NEIGHBORHOOD**, and a look at the **PROJET MOBILVIRE/BOOK-MOBILE PROJECT** that is bringing zines and artist books into underserved neighborhoods. Plus reviews, columns, DIY and more. 168 pgs.

**PP47 WAR SONGS.** Punk Planet #47 takes stock of the Bush administration's **WAR AGAINST TERRORISM**. Is it effective? Is it moral? Is it legal? We pose the questions that the mainstream media isn't asking to experts—the answers are eye-opening to say the least. PP47 dedicates an entire section to looking at the war from many different angles in interviews, essays, and articles. Sure to be controversial, PP47 pulls no punches in its analysis of the war. But it's not just bombs and tanks in this issue of Punk Planet—after taking an issue off to write about art & design, PP47 returns with tons of great music interviews. Interviewed in this issue are: classic queer punk **TOM ROBINSON** reminisces on the spirit of '77; Pacific Northwest stalwarts **UNWOUND**; the Indigo Girls' **AMY RAY** talks about her independent solo project; dyke punk **THE HAGGARD** take their bikes out for a spin; buzz band **THURSDAY** drops some knowledge; **XBXR** gives their last interview; and Punk Planet helps **MINT RECORDS** celebrate their 10 year anniversary. Also interviewed just in time for the Olympics: the **BURN THE OLYMPICS** collective—a secretive

group of activists devoted to direct action against the 2002 Olympic Games. In addition to the war coverage, and tons of interviews, PP47 features reviews, columns, fiction, DIY and more.

**PP48 TO HELL AND BACK.** Operating under the name **George Eric Hawthorne**, **George Burdi** was the flagbearer and general of the mid-'90s neo-Nazi youth movement. But a 1995 jail term found Burdi questioning his own beliefs, and when he was free, he left the neo-Nazi movement. In "To Hell and Back", Punk Planet 48 catches up with Burdi to talk about his past, his transformation, and his future. Controversial and disturbing, yet ultimately moving, this feature-length interview is not to be missed! Also interviewed in this issue: the unstoppable women-led band **ERASE ERRATA**; garage rock genre jumpers **THE DIRTBOMBS**; electronic sound artist **OVAl**; Afro-beat radicals **ANTIBALAS**; street punk superstars **THE SWINGING UTTERS**; and radical educator and poet **DEMETRAI MARTINEZ**. Any articles in PP48? You betcha. Punk Planet looks at the **DEATH OF DISTRIBUTION GIANT VALLEY** and what the loss of a giant one-stop means for independents. PP travels to look at the **FAILED DOLLARIZATION OF ECUADOR**; and **Andrew Dickson** talks about **TOURING WITH A DIY FILM**. Need more? How about a **DIY ON TRAVELLING AND WORKING ABROAD**, plus columns, reviews, and much, much more.

**PP49 BUSINESS AS USUAL? THE ROCKY RISE OF VAGRANT RECORDS** Very few labels in the underground have had the meteoric success of California's **Vagrant Records**—nor the controversy that has come with it. In issue #49, Punk Planet turns its award-winning reporting to investigating Vagrant's business practices. Is the label's reputation for predatory band signings and larger-than-life marketing just sour grapes from competitors (as the label claims) or the emergence of a dangerous wolf in sheep's clothing (as its harshest critics contend)? Reporters **Trevor Kelley** and **Kyle Ryan** go beyond the rumors and delve into the fascinating story of the controversial punk label.

**ALSO IN PP49:** Interviews with punk pioneers **MIKE WATT** and **RICHARD HELL**, rock 'n' rollers **FEDERATION X**, neo-wavers **THE RAPTURE**, nobel laureate (no kidding!) **ADOLFO PEREZ**, electronic underground mag **XLRR**, buzz band **NEW END ORIGINAL**, Brits **ELECTRELANE**, and the always entertaining **HOT WATER MUSIC**. Articles (besides the cover story) include the story of **Alex Sanchez**, a **LOS ANGELES GANG-PEACE ORGANIZER FACING DEPORTATION**; the story of **THE CIVIL SUIT AGAINST TWO SALVADORIAN GENERALS WHO NOW LIVE IN FLORIDA**; and **A FIRST PERSON ACCOUNT OF BEING "BANNED" FROM THE UNITED STATES POST-SEPTEMBER 11**. All this plus columns, DIY, reviews, and much, much more.

**PP50: OUR KIND OF TOWN.** Punk Planet marks its 50th issue with an issue that celebrates the magazine's home: **Chicago**. Featuring a diverse group of interviews and articles, PP50 showcases the many people, places, and things that make this city unique. To kick things off is the beautiful **JON LANGFORD PAINTING** of Chicago's Mayor Daley on the magazine's cover. Inside, **Langford** and bandmate **Sally Timms** wax philosophical about **25 YEARS OF THE MEKONS** and what moving to Chicago has meant for the band. Also interviewed in this issue: post-rock poster darlings **TORTOISE** talk about why the critics got it all wrong; **BLOODSHOT RECORDS** explain the link between country and punk; the woman behind **VENUS ZINE** talks about creating her amazing publication; **LOS CRUDOS' MARTIN SORRONGUEY** talks about why he's left Chicago; **HOUSING ORGANIZER JAMES MUMM** talks about fighting gentrification; **GREEN PARTY CANDIDATE (AND PUNK) JASON FARBMAN** talks about taking on Chicago machine politics; the two wonderful people behind **HOMOCORE CHICAGO** talk about the good old days; the braintrust behind the "dance show for kids of all ages" **CHIC-A-GO-GO** talk about making one of the best shows on cable access; death row inmate **AARON PATTERSON** talks about the brutal Chicago cop that beat him into confessing to a murder he didn't com-

mit; indie hip-hopppers **THE MOLEMEN** drop some knowledge; and garage rockers **THE DISHES** make some noise. **PLUS MANY MORE INTERVIEWS WITH FOLKS FROM CHICAGO.** In addition, there's all the columns, reviews, DIYs, letters and everything else you've come to expect for 50 issues.

**PP51** steers the car head-on into oncoming controversy with the emotional cover story, **WAVE A WHITE FLAG: DODGING BULLETS IN THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK**. In this moving first-hand account, author and frequent PP contributor **Jeff Guntzel** travels to the West Bank. Dodging bullets and checkpoints **Jeff** and a small team of dogged activists end up being the first Americans into the **Jenin** refugee camp after the Israeli Defense Forces leveled it. A truly heartbreaking story told with great empathy for both sides, **Jeff's** account is not to be missed. There's a ton more don't-miss material in this issue of Punk Planet including **Mark Andersen's** (co-author of the DC punk history book **Dance of Days**) unique interview with **BRATMOBILE'S ALLISON WOLFE** and **BLUEGRASS LEGEND HAZEL DICKENS**—these two women from different backgrounds and different eras discover just how much they have in common. Also interviewed in PP51: **AARON COMETBUS's** amazing zine turns 20; **EPITAPH RECORDS' CHIEF BRETT GUREWITZ** talks about his drug addiction, re-joining **Bad Religion** and learning to love life again; rocker and all-around amazing woman **SARAH DOUGHER**; **Billy Joe Armstrong's ADELIN RECORDS**; truly insane rockers **GUYANA PUNCH LINE** bring the noise; queer punk **ANDREW MARTINI (LIMPWRIST, KILL THE MAN WHO QUESTIONS)**; and much more. Articles in PP51 (in addition to **Jeff's** amazing account) include a profile of **TRANSGENDERED ACTIVIST AND ARTIST ED VARGA**; **THE PRIVATIZATION OF THE PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL SYSTEM**; and an account of the **STRUGGLES OF DAY LABORERS IN CHICAGO**. And more!

**PP52** warms up the cold winter months with **PAY TO CUM**, an in-depth look at the growing trend of

punk rock internet porn. Punk Planet's **Chris Ziegler** delves deep into the world of **DIY porn** to figure out if it's really offering something different—or is it just the same sleaze operating on a smaller scale? **Ziegler's** story offers a fascinating look into this world. Also in PP52: Interviews with **THE KILLS**, **Allison** from the much-loved **Discount's** new band; **Sex Pistols** photographer **DENNIS MORRIS**; instrumentalists **DENALI**; author **ZOE TROPE**; rockers **THE HISSYFITS**; the always entertaining punks **THE FLESHIES** (featuring a portrait drawn by cartoonist **Janelle**); Oaklandish art collective **NONCHALANCE**; turntablist **CHRISTIAN MARCLAY**; political hardcore band **BLOWBACK**; and political thinker **MICHAEL PARENTI** talks about the "terrorism trap." Other articles in PP52 include a look at **RADICAL LIBRARIANS**; the **FIGHT AGAINST WHITE-POWER MUSIC**; and a look at how **THE GAY PRIDE MOVEMENT HAS SOLD OUT**. Also making its first appearance in Punk Planet #52 is the magazine's **ALL NEW FRONT SECTION, STATIC**. While PP51 saw a reduction in the number of columnists writing for PP, PP52 sees the columns move to the back of the magazine and replaced by **Static**—almost a "zine within a zine" filled with shorter pieces about bands, people, artists, and more. It's totally new and very exciting. But even with the changes, everything you still have come to count on is here: reviews, columns, DIYs, and more... only better! And it's the longest issue of Punk Planet ever at 176 pages.

**PP53** leads off with an amazing exclusive interview with the three members of the legendary **JAWBREAKER**. Seven years after the band broke up, Punk Planet was able to talk with **Blake**, **Chris**, and **Adam** about what happened and look at the lasting legacy of the band. A must-have for fans both new and old, this interview is ultra-candid and truly revealing. The story will only be told once and they told it to Punk Planet. PP53 also features **EXTENSIVE COVERAGE OF THE COMING WAR IN IRAQ**. In coverage that spans three sections of the magazine Punk Planet looks at life in the streets of Iraq,

talks with ex-arms inspector **Scott Ritter**, and has a chat about the US' history with Iraq with investigative journalist **Jeremy Scahill**. Eye-opening and, well, downright scary, this coverage gives important background to the Bush administration's insistence on war. It's not all breakups and bombings in PP53, however. Also in the issue are interviews with **JOHN DOE** about going acoustic, **Touch & Go** dance party band !!! brings the funk, **Lookout's THE PATTERN** discusses the rebirth of rock n roll, indie hip-hop artist **MR. LIF** drops some knowledge, and Punk Planet visits with printer **Jen Farrell** and **STAR-SHAPED PRESS**. Additional articles include a look at the **ROCK N ROLL CAMP FOR GIRLS**; how the government is **KILLING WEB RADIO**; and a look at what happens to **PRISONERS ONCE THEY'RE RELEASED**. In addition, PP53 features our new front section **STATIC**, columns, DIY, reviews and much more. 160 pgs

**PP54** Punk Planet #54 asks the question **WHERE HAVE ALL THE MUSICIANS GONE?** In this time of war coming at any moment, **BRATMOBILE'S ALISON WOLF**, **ANTI-FLAG'S JUSTIN SANE**, **SLEATER-KINNEY'S CARRIE BROWNSTEIN**, **TED LEO**, **ATOM & HIS PACKAGE**, **JON LANGFORD**, **DILLINGER 4's ERIC FUNK** and many more speak out against it with passion and intelligence. Also in this issue, **ARTISTS REMEMBER JOE STRUMMER**. Interviews in this issue include Omaha's buzz band **CURSIVE**, label **G-7 WELCOMING COMMITTEE**, artist **ERIC DROOKER** (who also provided the art for this issue's cover), **Get You War On's DAVID REES**, ex-Karate **EAMONN VITT**, **THIS BIKE IS A PIPE BOMB**, **BLACK DICE** and more! And in addition to all that, PP54 features an in-depth look at how **CLEAR CHANNEL IS TAKING OVER ROCK CLUBS**. It's a jam-packed issue complete with **Static**, Columns, DIY Files, and much, much more.

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# see also

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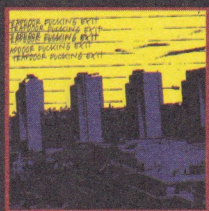
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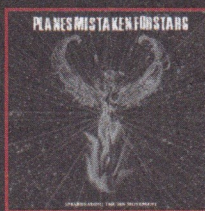
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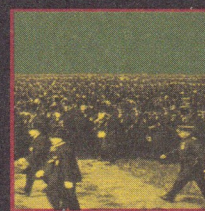
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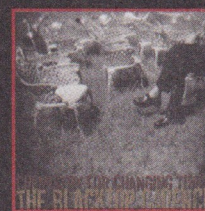
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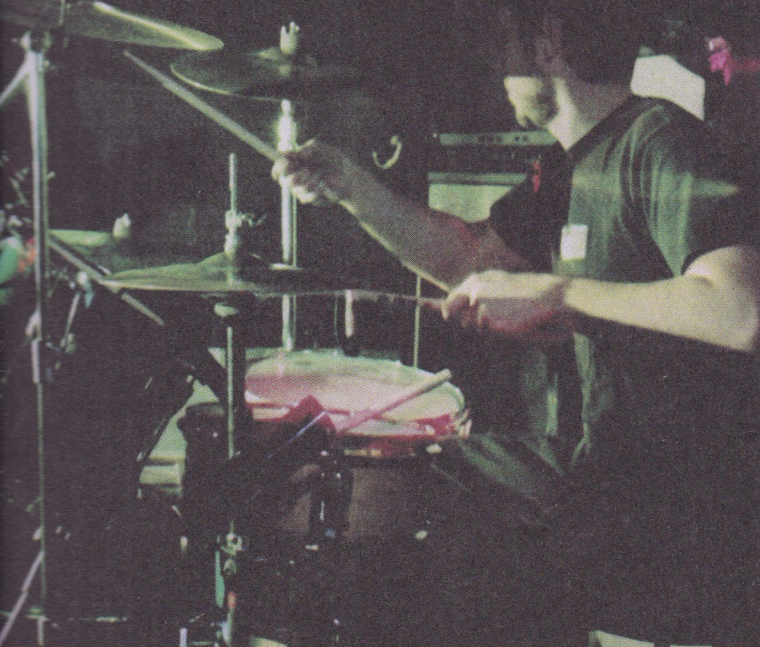


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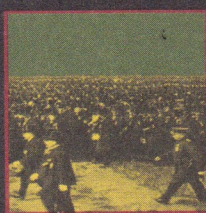


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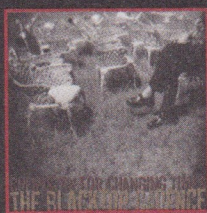
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